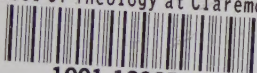


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QUEBEC CHAPEL

SERMONS,

VOL. VI.

THE

PERSON AND OFFICE OF CHRIST.

BY

HENRY ALFORD, B.D.

DEAN OF CANTERBURY;

LATE MINISTER OF THE CHAPEL.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS Volume will shortly be followed by the Sermons preached in the Lent of 1857, which, together with those on the Proverbs in the autumn of 1856, and a few scattered sermons, will make a seventh and concluding volume.

Deanery, Canterbury,
July 17, 1857.



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SERMON I.

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

1856.

JOHN i. 1.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.”

I PURPOSE beginning to-day, and continuing from time to time during the ensuing ecclesiastical year, a course of sermons on the Person and Office of our blessed Lord. We have been for some considerable time dealing with practical Christian duties, the proper results and fruits of faith. But it now becomes necessary again to review the articles of faith itself, and to recur to the doctrinal side of our pastoral teaching. I know that such preaching is apt to be not so interesting as the other; and is liable to the imputation of being not so directly useful. But while I ever maintain, and I hope have in practice recognized, the necessity of dwelling on the every-day duties of life, and

bringing the busy interests of the time under the influence of our religion, I cannot consent to disparage nor to omit such discourses, as lay down the great doctrines on which our faith itself must rest. At the same time, it is by no means my intention to confine myself this year to preaching doctrinal sermons, nor, in those very sermons, to speaking of doctrines only; but I propose to proceed in a manner the converse of that which I adopted last year, and now to bring forward prominently the doctrinal, as I did then the practical side.

I have described this course as being on the Person and Office of our Lord; and I will now say how I purpose to treat that great subject. It is my wish to go through the doctrines regarding our Saviour, in a plain, simple, and Scriptural form, so that I may be carrying you, and especially my younger hearers, through that which is known as the body of divinity, as far as regards this great portion of it. It is not my intention to reason much or to speculate on divine truth, but just to place it before you in an easy and connected form, as it is testified to in Scripture, and brought out in the creeds, and in the history of the Church.

There is something peculiarly appropriate in the present season as the commencement of such a course. We are preparing to celebrate the Incarnation of the Son of God. Now our meditations on his Person naturally begin with the

period preceding that Incarnation. The plain testimony of his own words tells us, that his birth into the world was not with Him, as with us, the beginning of his existence. If it was, I do not see how it would be possible to clear him from the charge of imposture and untruth. For his words are very explicit on the point. In John xvi. 28, we read, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father." And on his avowing this, his disciples, who had not understood what he had previously been saying to them, replied, "Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb" (or dark saying). Again when the Jews, astonished at a saying of his respecting Abraham, said to him, "Thou art not fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" He answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." And what the Jews understood by these words, is plain enough. You or I might say, or any of them might have said, such words, meaning by them, "Before Abraham was, I existed in the counsel and foreknowledge of God, for He knows all his works from the beginning:" but the Jews did not thus understand our Lord. They were more reasonable men than our modern unbelievers, who do thus understand him. They took up stones to cast at him, thinking that he had spoken blasphemy. In other words, they understood him to say that

He was in existence before Abraham was made. And He speaks in another place even more explicitly than this. It is at the solemn moment when the peculiar season of his sufferings is about to open on him. He is praying to his Father, and says, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world began." These last words serve to introduce us to the expression with which St. John begins his Gospel, as in our text. "IN THE BEGINNING:"—viz. of all things: further back than the mind can conceive. For, form in your mind any image you will, however far back beyond the present state of things, of a definite point and a condition existing, and THE BEGINNING is beyond that. The expression is a simple one, but it baffles thought. And we may see how far it reaches back beyond that same term in the opening of the story of creation, if we compare the two things which are spoken of. "In the beginning God created." Well, creation is an act, happen when it will: and my thoughts are thus only sent back to some very early period, when God performed that act, of creating the heavens and the earth. But here we have, "In the beginning was the Word." Now mere being, mere existence, is not an act, but a state; and what we have here asserted, is, not that at some very remote period the Word began to be, but that beyond the very

remotest period which the mind can conceive, the Word WAS, was existing, not then brought into being, but then having his being, and consequently, for such is the expression in which we take refuge when baffled by these things which stretch beyond the range of our ideas, "being from everlasting." It would be plainly superfluous in me to spend time over demonstrating to you, that this eternal Word in our text is identical with the Son of God, in the presence of such an assertion following in ver. 14. "The Word became flesh, and had his tabernacle among us." But it will be well that we should rest a little on this name, "the Word," which is here given to our Lord. It was one which had been used before the Evangelist wrote, and remarkably prepared by God for the purposes of his revelation. From that previous use, it was clearly understood when used by him, and applied to the Son of God. It was known to mean, He by whom the Father utters his will, whether in actual word, or in his works; He who is the expression of God. "God," says the 18th ver., "hath no man seen at any time: the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he declared him." This then is the first notice which we have of the Office of Christ: and it is one in the highest degree important for us to bear in mind. He is, says the Epistle to the Heb., i. 3, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the very

impress of his Substance.” All manifestations of God are by Him. Creation, the material manifestation of God, is by Him. Redemption, the spiritual manifestation of God, is by Him also. And as He is the Word from the Father, so is He also the Word to the Father. No man cometh to the Father, but by or through Him. All revelation is made, is given, is sent down, through Him: all prayer, all praise, every desire of the creature, rises up to God through Him. And so by the very nature and essence of his being as God the Word, for we are not now speaking of his incarnation, He is a Mediator—He is the Mediator, between God and all his works. I would pray you to lay this down in your minds as your first thought and first belief on the Office of Christ—that he is, by his very nature as God, this Mediator. It is a sublime subject, but by no means an unapproachable or an inconceivable one: by no means again an unprofitable one for a Christian thus to meditate on and be assured on. For look at it thus. I now know the Lord Jesus Christ as the Mediator between God and man. I know him as he walked on earth, as he suffered, as he rose again, as he reigns above in my nature, taken by him into the Godhead. Now is it not an immense confirmation of my faith, a great light let in on my apprehension of that his mediatorial work and office, if I also apprehend that it was undertaken and carried

through, in all its mysteries and marvels of love, by him as being necessarily and from everlasting the only mediator between God and his creatures? I see now that all He thus did and suffered, was done and suffered in virtue of his divine office of being the expression of the Father's will: all that he says, he speaks of and from the Father: his whole mind to us expresses the mind of the Father: he glorified not himself to be an high priest, but Him who said to him, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Thus indeed he ever himself speaks and acts. "Father, I glorified thee on earth: I finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Thus God hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, in Redemption, as in former days he spake to mankind by him in Creation, in Providence, in the Law, in the Prophets. Every word of God comes through Christ, and did so from the beginning: He is "THE WORD."

This Word then, thus being in the beginning, is said also by the Evangelist to have been "WITH GOD." That is, not "with," in the sense of together with, or besides: but "with" in the sense of abiding with, as when we say, "I have it with me," or "He is abiding with us"—"with God," so as to be in that place (if we may so speak) where God especially was present—so as to be at home with Him and inseparable from Him. Our Evangelist, in a

passage already quoted, expresses this in other words; "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father:" in his closest counsels, delighting in Him, and in being the acting ex-

L expression of his most holy will. And to this has ever been referred by the Church that sublime description in the Book of Proverbs, ch. viii., where Wisdom says, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the foundations of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth. Then I was by him as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight rejoicing always before him: rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth: and my delights were with the sons of men."—It has been rightly believed that this personification of the wisdom of God can only find its truest and highest

sense in him who is emphatically the personal expression of that wisdom, even his only begotten Son. It is thus that the Word was with God—as his beloved in whom he was well pleased. The expression of that love, the unfolding of that well-pleasing, we have in Creation, we have in Providence, we have in Redemption. A slight and lower portion of its effects is revealed to us here: the weightier and higher tokens of it remain for our contemplation when we shall see him as he is. Only let us in this present attempt to state and confirm our faith, carry our thoughts back, and assure ourselves, that there never was a time when our adorable Redeemer was not thus with God: that when he declares to us “the Father loveth the Son,” he speaks of that which was no new thing, which had not sprung up since nor with the Incarnation, but of that which had been from everlasting,—that while he said it—the heaven above him and the earth under his feet, and the sons of men who stood around him, and his own human frame which uttered the words,—and all that is seen and heard and known were but the fruits and tokens,—were, so to speak, but drops of spray from the boundless ocean,—of that eternal and unfathomable love.

This intimate association then and communion, this entire unity of will and purpose of the Son with the Father, belong not only to

the subordination and obedience of his humanity, but to that state also which He had with the Father before the worlds began. The Word was with God : never separate from nor without Him : abiding, resting, dwelling, with, and in the bosom of, the Father.

The next and concluding clause of our text follows now by an easy sequence. That which WAS in the beginning — that which was in the beginning WITH GOD and inseparable from Him — WHAT WAS IT? Could it be a created being? If so, a certain definite moment must have witnessed its calling into being, and before that moment it was not, and thus could not be in the beginning. With creation necessarily begin the incidents and limitations of time. Created being is the channel, so to speak, in which the stream of time flows on. Whatever is created, had a beginning. However lofty and spiritual, all angelic existences, being created, had a beginning, and so were not in the beginning. But the Word “WAS” in the beginning, and is therefore uncreated. Again the Word was “WITH GOD.” Could a created being thus accompany the Almighty in the inhabitation of eternity? Could it be said of that jealous One who giveth not his glory to another, that even the loftiest of his angelic ministers was or could be, “with Him” — his assessor — his companion — the sharer of his glory — the impress of his substance? We are thus, you see, led on to the

next declaration of our text, "the Word WAS GOD:" was no created being, no angelic intelligence, but partook of the nature and essence of God—was as God, equal with the Father, as indeed the very term itself implies: so that the Father in the beginning was not more, nor the Son less divine—but both were coequal and coeternal. It is often perilous to illustrate these lofty subjects by mere earthly parallels, for fear the illustration should be carried too far, and thus obscure the truth it wishes to make plain. But in this particular case, we may, I conceive, find some parallel in our own share of our common humanity. We may differ in office and employment, but in this nature we all share alike: its peculiarities, its infirmities, its common inheritance, we all partake equally. Let us not use the similitude for more than it will suffice for: but only endeavour reverently to apprehend by its light this equality of substance and nature, of which we are treating. Now let me speak of another particular, which though necessarily implied, yet requires to be formally stated. The Father and the Son are of necessity personally distinct. "There is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost," is the confession of the Creed. And to lose sight of this distinction, would be to introduce confusion into the whole matter. Personal acts are attributed to the Son as well as to the Father. He

was no less the divine personal Son of God on earth, than he was in heaven before he became flesh. And indeed, as we have often impressed upon you, and shall have occasion to do again on coming to this part of our subject; this his divine personality was his *only* personality. He was not two persons, but one—the Son of God. Into this his Godhead he took the manhood: but he did not become a human person. However, this is to anticipate a future portion of our course. I mention it now to set clearly before you the necessity of this distinctness of persons from the beginning, and its consistency with all that was afterwards undertaken, and wrought by the divine Son of God. The Lord Jesus, in his humiliation, was the same divine Person as before the worlds begun: clothed in the garb of flesh, but not a different person. And if at that time we find him performing acts of distinct personality—addressing the Father—speaking of the Father; so must it have been, setting aside merely the difference made by his humiliation, in the beginning, when he was with God and was God. But a few moments are required, to meditate on the words “was God.” Let us realize to ourselves, as far as we may, how much is implied in them. We must not narrow nor stint the glorious truth. It is no metaphorical expression—no saying that we need be afraid of pushing to its utmost literal limit. We

must conceive then of the Word, as of one clothed with all the acknowledged and glorious attributes of Deity. He Himself speaks of the "glory which I had with thee before the worlds began." The fulness of the Father's glory was upon, shone forth from, was expressed by, Him. "All that the Father hath," he says, "is mine." You cannot exalt, you cannot reverence, you cannot adore, the Son of God, too much. There is no such thing as exaggerating his divine majesty and glory. The worship which we owe to the Father, that same precisely we owe to Him. He himself describes the purpose of his course to be, "that all men may honour the Son even as they honour the Father." Perhaps, brethren, we do not enough consider this divine majesty of our Redeemer. Perhaps we are apt too exclusively to regard him as having our nature and bearing our infirmities; too entirely to look on him as man exalted and not enough as God blessed for ever: too often to stop with claiming his sympathy as our Brother, instead of making that claim the mere access to a higher one, claiming our portion in him, as our Lord and our God.

O then, dear friends, in all our subsequent discourses on his person and office, lay down this one I pray you as the foundation, and take its position for granted. He of whom we speak, is the eternal uncreated Word: existing in the beginning; with God in the beginning;

and God, himself. With nothing short of this are we content: with this, we are safe in pursuing our further enquiries. Once on this foundation, and ever recurring to these primary truths, we can fearlessly watch his work of human mediatorship, and accompany him into the very depths of his humiliation. And I feel that such a caution is far from being unneeded in the day in which we live. I have been mostly induced to undertake this course, by seeing the many lax statements which are prevalent respecting our Lord's Office and Person: by observing how ready men are in our own time to allow themselves to forget the first principles of the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Every speculator on the phenomena of his own mind, or on the world without, or on the progress of opinion in other lands, considers himself capable of breaking up the foundations which God has laid, and which the faith and patience of the saints of God have for ages proved: and we find the crudest misconceptions, and most fragmentary criticisms, of the words and acts of our Lord, put forward with a claim to the consideration and acceptance of sensible men, and actually in some cases meeting with such consideration and acceptance: indicating that the truth of his Person and the character of his Office, and the nature of his Work, have been too much put out of sight and forgotten, and in consequence need to be re-

called to mind and anew gone over for our edification.

And finally, let me beseech you to let this day's thoughts be to you no barren facts in your minds, but as they are well calculated to be, the stay and consolation of your lives. The Evangelist St. John put forth the assertion in our text, not for a mere dogma in theology, but for a living and working truth—to serve the great end of his Gospel—"that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in his name."

Yes, beloved, there is strength, and there is life, in the conviction that our blessed Redeemer is the holy One of God—the eternal Son of the Father, with Him and coequal with Him from the beginning. If it be so, I need not hesitate to roll all my burden on Him, for he can and he will bear it. Be it sin, be it sorrow, be it care, his Almightyness is a safe warrant for me, as his love is a sufficient attraction. O may your faith and mine be that of the leper of old—"Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." But we know his will—Bethlehem testified it, Nazareth confirmed it, Calvary has proved it: we know his will: let us then, who have so much more proof of his *power*, be at least equally certain of it with this afflicted one, who, even in the days of the Lord's humiliation, was so inwardly and strongly persuaded of it.

“And that, knowing the time.” These solemn words seem to-day to dwell on our ears, to haunt our steps, and shape our resolutions. Another Advent season—another beginning of the cycle of those commemorations, in which the Christian lives the year unto the Lord. And where are we—where is each one of us? Do we need *less* his power for our weakness, his blood for our guiltiness, his Spirit for our guidance? O brethren, since last Advent, the white hairs are whiter, the feeble pulse is feebler, the strong arm is beginning to tremble. Since last Advent, the reality of a speedy dissolution is standing up like a barrier in the way of many an one, who dreamed of years of pleasure before. Where are we? Are we wanting to our holy calling? O the world has not been wanting to its calling! Its great testimony has been ever going up from day to day—the fool hath been saying in his heart, “There is no God”—and all around us, in evil deeds and evil words, has man’s guilt, man’s depravity, man’s ruin been testified. And where has been our testimony—yours and mine? Have our feet indeed been planted on this everlasting rock? Have we for ourselves found the Son of God? In other and in closer words, “Have we cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light?” We are going to accompany Christ through another cycle of his words and acts—of those words

and acts which were the complete expression of his Father's will : are we one with Him, as He is with the Father ?

One word more. " We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge." This eternal Word of God, so full of divine power and of human sympathy, shall one day sit on his throne and summon us before him. O then take with you, in the fulness of their meaning, his own words of assurance : " Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment : but is passed from death unto life."

SERMON II.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

1856.

JOHN i. 3.

“ All things were made by Him : and without Him was not any thing made that was [or hath been] made.”

THE first thing which we know of the Son of God is, that he was in the beginning with God, and was God, coequal and coeternal with the Father. And of this we treated last Sunday. We are to-day led on to the next declaration of the inspired Evangelist respecting Him : viz. that he is the Creator of all things. No fact can be more plainly declared in words, than this is by the words of my text. But lest it might seem that we had rested so vast a matter on an insulated text, let us first refer you to other passages, where the same truth is no less plainly set forth. We cannot cast our eye down this first chapter of St. John, without finding that he again recurs to this statement

as plain and undoubted: "He was in the world," he says, "and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." The Gospels, forming as they do the record of his humiliation, do not ordinarily speak of his majesty and power. But when the Holy Spirit took of the things of Christ and shewed them to the Apostles, then we find them unmistakably proclaiming this fundamental truth. Thus St. Paul in Col. i. 16, 17, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: for by him all things were created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." And in the opening of the Epistle to the Hebrews we read, "God . . . hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands."

I need hardly remind you, that the Church of Christ in her creeds has borne unequivocal testimony to Christ as the Creator. In that one, which formed the confession of the great Council of Nicæa, where the Godhead of our Lord was especially asserted, we just now de-

clared him to be very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father:" and then added, as a further description of his majesty, "By whom all things were made."

I will not now dwell on the prophetic testimonies to the same truth in the Old Testament. I do not wish to-day to enter on questions of Scripture interpretation, but to state to you this great doctrine and its consequences simply and plainly. How numerous and how direct those testimonies are, the one sample of them already given from the Epistle to the Hebrews may suffice to shew you. For if that Psalm, so directly addressed to the eternal God, can be claimed for the Son of God, it is obvious that similar addresses, occur almost where and in what language they may, are to be regarded as having reference to the same divine Person.

But I cannot omit some of those proofs which our blessed Lord gave during his course in the flesh, of his right and power as Creator. I find one of them in the first miracle that he wrought, that of turning water into wine. There is here no trace of delegated power, as when Moses was commanded to stretch out his hand over the rivers and they should become blood. I find another in his arising and rebuking the winds and the sea: another in his language and act to the poor leper, "I will: be thou clean." I contrast the one miracle

with St. Paul's conduct in the storm, when he says to the terrified crew around him, "There stood by me this night the angel of God whose I am and whom I serve, and said, Fear not, Paul :—" and I contrast the other with that of St. Peter, when he was asked an alms by the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, —and replied to him, "Silver and gold have I none : but such as I have give I thee :—" and what was this ? Did he say as of himself, "I will that thou rise up and walk ?" Not so : but "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up, and walk." I find yet rarer proofs of the Creatorship of the Lord Jesus, as I look on in the history of his miracles. What was the twice-repeated miracle of multiplying the food of thousands, but an act of creation ? And it has been long ago remarked that in raising the dead, the Lord speaks and acts in a manner totally different from that of any of His commissioned servants. "Elias," says Massillon, "raises the dead, it is true ; but he is compelled to stretch himself many times over the body of the child : he uses impassioned words and gestures and prayers : we see clearly that he is invoking a power above him ; that he is summoning from the kingdom of death a soul which is not at his call ; that he is not himself master of death and life. Jesus Christ raises the dead as he performs the most ordinary acts : he speaks as a master to those who sleep that sleep of death :

we see clearly that he is God of the dead as of the living,—he is never more calm than when doing his greatest deeds.” These and other proofs of his Creatorship were continually breaking forth even during the period of the hiding of his majesty and power.

We believe then in the Son of God as the Creator of the universe. Let us try to set this truth before us in its reality : to see with all reverence, and under the limitations and revelations of Scripture, what we mean, when we say this. The Son of God is the eternal Word of the Father : he is the expression of the Father’s will, acting in perfect accord with, and in pursuance of, the purpose of Him who ruleth all things after the counsel of his own will. When then we say that the Son of God made the worlds, we do not speak as of an act of his, independent of and disconnected from the Father, for this, from the very nature of the Son of God, is impossible. Let us take the precise words of our Lord himself on so sublime a point : Jesus said to the Jews, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father do : for whatsoever things he doeth, these also doeth the Son in like manner.” And in accordance with this his declaration, is the expression before quoted from the Epistle to the Hebrews, where, after it has been said that he is the

brightness of the Father's glory and the very impress of his substance, it is added, "by whom also he made the worlds;" i. e. by whose agency in creation the great creative purpose of the Father was carried into effect. And in our text itself, and that similar assertion in the 10th verse, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not," the preposition used both times is not that of primary origination, as if Creation sprung out of the will and purpose of the Son of God; but that of personal agency, represented indeed correctly by our word "by," but requiring this explanation in order to be accurately understood. If it were English to say, all things were made "through" Him, it would perhaps give the meaning more closely: but when we would express such agency, we use the word "by:" "by whom also He made the worlds." The creative work of the Son is then the carrying out of the creative purpose of the Father. But, be it ever remembered, not as by a subordinate agent, to whom it is said, "Do this, and he doeth it:" for the Son is coeternal and coequal with the Father, and acts in accord with Him as a divine personal agent, delighting to do his will, and to carry out his purpose.

Now let us come down to the Gospel narrative, and connect this high truth with the Lord's humiliation. We are not enough accustomed to do this. We are apt to forget his

glory and his majesty in the meanness of his earthly investiture. It is not now our immediate employment to speak of the vastness and marvellous nature of that self-humiliation. That will come before us in our next sermon. We will now take that for granted, as simply evidenced by the facts of the history, and merely set against it the great doctrine of which we now speak. Endeavour then to realize in your minds, brethren, that he who lay in the manger at Bethlehem, a helpless child, had himself hung out as a curtain those heavens in which the star was pointing to the place of his birth; had himself created her from whom he sprang according to the flesh, and whose word his youthful years obeyed. Realize in your minds that all those accessions in wisdom and stature, of which St. Luke tells us, grew up around his mind and body by the wonderful operation of laws which he himself had made, and capacities which his own hand had implanted. Connect this view of him with some of the incidents and sayings of that life on earth for us. See him fasting forty days and forty nights in the wilderness: subjecting His bodily frame, the work of his own hands, to extreme hunger, the natural penalty of those laws to which he had subjected its being and nurture. Full well did the subtle foe know when he came to him, the extent of the power which he was then hiding behind the vast

purpose of redemption : “ If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” And our Lord does not deny the inference here implied. He does not say, “ Such power is not given to the Son of God :” nay, his very first miracle, as we have said, proves that it was : that the processes of creation all lay in his hand, to carry on, to accelerate, to dispense with, as seemed good to him. But that which he did say in reply, conveys as deep a lesson as his tacit acknowledgment did : “ Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Thou hast spoken rightly of the creative power of the Son of God ; but it reaches further than thou hast imagined. It can command not only that these stones be made bread, but that this body be sustained without bread, if it be His will, in accord with whom the Son of God performs all his acts. Again, watch him as he is teaching on that mountain, with his disciples gathered around. Mark his words when he points out to them, as excitements to their trust in God, the birds which flew over their heads, and the flowers on which they were treading. “ Behold the fowls of the air ; consider the lilies of the field.” Notice this for the sake of the wonderful saying which follows. “ Verily, I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” Now never man spake like this.

When man directs admiration to a flower, it is because he having more exquisite taste commends to others those beauties which have been overlooked, or because he has with the searching eye of science discovered some minute adaptation of form, or combination of colours, unobserved before. If he makes comparisons of this kind, it is mere matter of human estimate: it is all, as we say, subjective: his words are such as these: "Who would not prefer the exquisite beauty of the flower to the vain attempts of man to rival nature?" but our Lord goes down into the secret of the flower's life, and, as in this saying, asserts that of the hidden things of creation, which no eye but that of the Creator ever saw. "In truth I say to you, that the creative skill of exquisite adaptation and colour bestowed on these (that skill which he himself exercised, that colour which was prepared in his own laboratory and laid on with his own pencil), surpasses all the applications of texture and dye, all the tinsel of metal and jewels with which the noblest of earth's kings bedecks himself."

It is worthy of our pains also, to trace in the parables of our blessed Lord the same manner of dealing with the processes and secrets of nature. All seem open and familiar to him. He views them and speaks of them, not like us when we speak of them, as wonderful things seen from without and partly understood, but

as of things which his own hand has made, and laws which his own wisdom has ordained. I own that such indications as we are now mentioning would be far too slight to found the doctrine of his Creatorship upon: nor am I adducing them for that purpose—but to illustrate the doctrine when once grounded on other and plainer considerations. To us Christians, who believe in him as the Creator of all things, it is matter of deep interest to watch every simplest word that falls from him in allusion to nature and her processes, to man and his capacities: knowing as we do that such words will be spoken not from the weak and imperfect store of knowledge which man possesses, but from those inexhaustible stores of divine wisdom, which first devised them, and brought them into being.

Having then followed this great doctrine through its proofs and its illustrations, it remains that we yet speak of its references and consequences relatively to ourselves. “What think ye of Christ?” is the most important question which can be asked of us. According as we estimate Him rightly or wrongly, worthily or inadequately, so will our discipleship of him be, our devotion to him, our imitation of him, our life in union with him, our participation of his Spirit. Well then—“All things were made by him.” What then is this world to us Christians? What, but a

standing testimony to the power and love of our Redeemer? And do these seem to you mere commonplace words? Do you doubt what difference it would make in our thoughts and practice if we were constantly to bear this in mind? O there need be no room for such question, if you consider aright the object of the thoughts and life of a Christian man. "To me," said St. Paul, "to live is Christ." "Because I live," said our Lord himself, "ye shall live also." The very life of the believing Christian man, the thoughts which are the breath of his soul, the energies which he puts forth, the words which he speaks, the hopes on which he sustains himself, are Christ—full of him—just so far worth as they are penetrated by him. He is in fact our Life—the only principle to us of real vitality. Now let me ask you a question with regard to the lower natural life of the body. Is it of no consequence to us, whether the body be entirely, or only partially penetrated by its wonderful principle of life? Is it no matter to us if a limb or two hang useless and paralyzed—no matter if the eye be dim, the ear dull, the hand trembling, the feet halting? O there is no doubt here. The natural man knows better. "Let me have," he says, "every limb sound, every faculty perfect." For this he spares no pains, he grudges no outlay. He expends large treasure, he traverses vast continents, he denies

himself and he afflicts himself, that he may recover the shrinking limb, and nerve the loosened frame—he suspends his employment, and goes into exile from his home, that he may once more feel the current of life bounding through his veins. Well may we say of men, O fools and blind! Ready to spend all this pains (and we blame it not) over the natural frame which must drop into dust and dissolve—but for that glorious and eternal life of the man, even Christ in him the hope of glory, not awakened to appreciate its loss, not caring for its absence, not desiring, or but faintly desiring its presence and completion; going on through these years, which are gathering up behind us into judgment, with the limbs of the soul paralyzed, its energies unexerted, and yet no care taken, no cost bestowed, no thought given that Christ may live and be felt through the inner life; that *He* may be known as he is and has revealed himself, whom to know truly is eternal life. Yes, brethren, it does make an immense difference in a Christian, whether he knows all or only a portion of his Redeemer. There is a miserable semi-socinian view of Christ, which is even now paralyzing the energies of many a sincere though but partial believer. It is considered enough to accept him as a teacher—to acknowledge with the lips that he died for us—to have some barren belief of his present High-priesthood in heaven:

but O how different is this from the thoughts of Him which my text ought to inspire! "All things were made by him: and without him was not any thing made that hath been made." To him who comes thoroughly to believe and feel this truth, the earth and all that is therein puts on a different aspect. Before, it required an exertion to think of Christ. He was to him as an absent friend whose image must be recalled by an effort, and that effort perhaps the greater in proportion to the wish to recall the image. Christ was not bound up with his ordinary thoughts: not present to him when he went out and came in, when he conversed, and wrought his daily work. And an absent Christ of this kind has very little power over a man for good; lives not in his life, speaks not in his discourse, kindles not in his eye. But after this truth has been apprehended and felt, how vast is the change! "All things were made by him:" then I owe to him who died for me and who lives to make intercession for me, my being itself and this bodily frame in which it is enshrined: in all I see about me, I see his redeeming love manifested; the heavens and the earth and the sons of men and the tribes of animal life, all speak with one voice, all testify to one source of their being—one upholding and fostering hand. Wherever I turn, is Christ. Without him was nothing made. The cold abstraction known

by the name of natural religion, which never converted a heart nor amended a life, no longer chills my thoughts as I meditate on creation: the religion of nature is to me the religion of grace. All science becomes lighted up by the Redeemer's presence. The Spirit of truth is no longer the mere right-deeming of man, but the living Spirit of Christ. And not only does the intelligent observer of creation become thus informed and elevated by recognizing the Creatorship of Christ, but the same glorious truth visits and blesses the humblest son of toil: calls him out from stupid indifference to God's works into reverent and grateful acknowledgment of his Saviour in all things. For observe the mind of such an one towards creation around him. I will suppose him a religious man, knowing the name and the work of Christ, and taking it to himself in faith, but taught in the usual loose and inaccurate way respecting him in whom he believes. For forgiveness of sin, for strength in temptation, for salvation hereafter, he looks, it is true, to Him: but what of the world without? It, he has been taught, was made by some mighty Power or other, separate from Christ, and never associated with him in his mind. It is a rough world; a world full of trial, and of incentive to sin. And this world has nothing to do with Christ, nor Christ with it. So he battles through the world as he best may, by the light and in the

strength of his more solemn hours and his resolutions at the throne of grace: but he never dreams that it is all Christ's world; that all therein is, so to speak, part of the furniture and instruments of redemption: that the field he tills, the material which he manufactures, the loom which he works, are all, though in a different class and manner, only so many pages of God's great testimony to his blessed Son: that every rub which the world gives him, every temptation with which it solicits him, every condition and arrangement of its objects around him, comes from the permission and subsists with the continued watchful care of Him, who loved him and gave himself for him. What wonder if such an one misses Christ in life? what wonder if he finds the world dreary and cheerless? what wonder if, while you are informing his head with Christian doctrine, his heart, which is of flesh, and beats in time to the great life of things around him, has another interest, another employment?

Dear brethren, we Christians have very much to learn concerning creation. We have most of us yet to knit up the link which alone can cause the spark of divine truth to pass through and animate creation—that link which unites it to Christ. We want, not merely for half an hour this morning, but through life, to connect Him with all the processes of life around us,

with the heavens and their wonders, with the earth and her tribes, with the objects which lie around our daily path, and with this life of ours itself, and the marvels and mercies of our bodily frames. So that whichever way we look, is Christ: without Him was nothing made which hath been made. In the busy city, where man crowds and seethes around us, where the world, and the man of mere worldly taste, see all that is mean and vulgar and selfish and repulsive, even there is His power and his love: in Him all this mighty stir, all these manifold interests, consist and are held together: He is the ever-present Shepherd of all this vast wandering browsing flock: He it is who upholds every step in safety: who bears in his hand every life, and thinks of each one more than he thinks of himself. It is He who is at this moment carrying onward, with infinite and never-erring wisdom, the vast complication of all men's interests; the tangled and intertwining influences of so many thousand lives on one another. And His mighty and beneficent presence equally watches over all nature, and ought to be discerned by us in it. From man again downward, without Him is nothing. Creation, as we long since saw, is but a part of Redemption: is but the stage, on which the Redeemer's great love is outwardly manifested.

Let us end our reflections with two lessons: and the first, of warning. We say to the man

of the world—to the careless inactive Christian—how can you escape, if you neglect so great salvation? A salvation not confined to one portion of your being, and of all that you are and see, but whereof your whole being, and all around you, is but the instrument and the working out? Christ is not only a moral Saviour, not only a spiritual Saviour, but an universal Saviour: the Saviour of the body as well as of the soul, both of which He has made and upholds. The less excuse then for those who know him not and obey him not, where He is so amply and constantly revealed. And the last word, one of exceeding comfort. Without Him, is nothing. Let us take this fully into our thoughts, and bear it about with us in our lives. He is not an absent, but a present Saviour. In the world which He has made, there is no mischance, no misadventure, general or individual. He is not far removed, so that we need go to seek him; but is here and every where present: not our souls only, not the witness within us merely, but our bodies, and all that is around is, testify to him whom we love. May we so find him and ever converse with him, in his works, and in his world, as well as in our spiritual life, that then, when we most need Him, we may most easily find him to be with us.

SERMON III.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

1856.

PHIL. ii. 6, 7.

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God : but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”

WE have already spoken of the pre-existent majesty of the Son of God, and have expounded and insisted on the doctrine that He is the Creator of all things. But greater matters than even these remain to be told. We have now to speak of him as the Redeemer. And this we will do to-day, by God's help, generally, and prefatorily, as regards the single fact of that self-humiliation which was the method chosen by him to accomplish his design in redemption.

And first, let us recall that portion of the glories of his Person and Office, which has already come before us : for this is

important towards forming a right estimate of that other. We saw Him coeternal and co-equal with the Father in the Majesty of the Godhead : the personal expression of the Father's will, and the brightness of his glory. We saw Him, in pursuance of that his office, creating the Universe : summoning into being thousands of different ranks and orders of existence, fixing the laws which should govern them and the conditions of their permanence, upholding them when so arranged, and being the ever-present Lord and gracious Protector of all his creatures. Now if we ask ourselves the question,—and it is not a presumptuous one, but one which every enlightened mind is justified in asking and competent to entertain,—For what purpose did the Son of God create this world which we see about us ?—we find ourselves at once entangled in a difficulty of a formidable kind. Observe, in asking this question, I am supposing our thoughts confined to the globe on which we dwell. There may be, or there may not be, other worlds, peopled like this with divers orders of created beings : it is an enquiry for men of science to deal with, and one of great interest : but in all theological as well as practical matters, we must confine our attention to our own world, and deal with that as being all, unfettered by further and less certain considerations. When then we ask this question as regards our globe, and the first obvious

answer is given, that the intent of its creation was, by that creation to display the power and wisdom and goodness of God, we are met by this very serious difficulty: that, wonderful as are the proofs of his power in nature, surpassing conception as are the indications of his wisdom, undeniable as are the tokens of his goodness, yet all these seem thwarted and counteracted by the prevalence of decay and death and sin: that from the lowest to the highest of his creatures, not happiness but trial, not pleasure but pain, not endurance but transitoriness, seems to be the lot of all created beings which we see around us. As the Apostle has wonderfully expressed it, the creature was made subject to vanity, not of its own will, i. e. not on account of any resolve or act of its own, but by reason of Him who subjected the same. Man's disobedience has embittered and intensified this subjection: but even before that, the first man was of the earth, earthy: liable to perversion, and thus to change and decay. It is not my purpose to deal further with this part of our subject than to say, that the only solution of this difficulty is, Redemption. We have gone more at length into the matter, in our course of Sermons on Divine Love. And I must impress on you again that which we then insisted on,—that all the infirmity and decay and mischief, which we see in the world, is not by us Christians for a moment to be regarded as a deplor-

able accident, a victory gained over God by God's enemy and ours. We must not thus rob our Father of his Power, and our Redeemer of his glory. We see and acknowledge and deplore this marring and blighting of God's works—of God's noblest work, the spirit of man: but at the same time we shut our mouths before the infinite wisdom which has permitted all this, nay which by the original laws of creation made all this possible—contemplated and tolerated it all. To the man who knows not the Gospel of Christ, the world is a great failure: God is a thwarted and baffled Creator, and his chief work is not a triumph of wisdom, but a blunder. You must see beyond nature, to understand nature, and beyond man, to be contented that you are man. You must live above the world, if you would live thankfully in the world. If you are a man of the world only, I can conceive no befitting frame of mind for you, in such a world as this, but utter misery. Your joys are all fading: your wishes are all counteracted, or evaporate in the very fulfilment: your bodily dwelling is falling to pieces; your friends are dropping into the grave; what possible comfort is there for you, in this world, or in the next? And if it be said that such way of speaking tends to make respectable people discontented and unhappy, I reply that that is the very thing I want to do both by doctrinal and practical sermons. I have no

mission to teach the worldly man how to live comfortably : our mission is to prick such people in the heart, to make them uneasy and uncomfortable ; nay more, to exterminate the race, if we can. For in life or in death, at home or abroad, in his hopes or his fears, or his objects, there is no one so useless, so mischievous, so miserable, as the decent, self-cherishing, apparently contented man of the world. Well then, in pursuance of my mission, I turn to any one of the many men or women of the world here present, and say to them, This world which you so love, is for you an unintelligible, a provoking, an unhappy world. You cannot solve the riddle of creation. You talk of holding up against misery and disappointment, just as our fathers dealt with great masses of matter before those wonderful powers were discovered by which we now toss them as feathers. You endure sorrow, stoop to disappointment, face danger and death, by the mere force and suppleness and endurance of animal and mental constitution. For each grief, there is a corresponding effort : the nerves are strung, the sinews firmly set, and the storm is weathered. But what when the nerves are unstrung, the sinews relaxed, the frame shattered ? O then you will want hope, and you have none : faith, which is utterly absent from you : resignation, which means not the sullen calmness of a coerced criminal, but the cheerful acquiescence of an intelligent child. My good

friend, this wretched world, and its sin, and its decay and its death, are a weight far too heavy for you and your powers: a weight which will assuredly weigh down your soul, and crush you for ever. Your present state is bad enough to live by: you will find it worse to die by, and worst of all to weather eternity by. But you turn to me and say, Why travel so far out of your subject to indulge in a tirade against us? Can you not, even when on doctrinal matters, let us and our way of living alone? And to this I answer, that one great value and point of doctrinal sermons is, their bearing on you and your practice. For example, in this matter of which we are speaking, this miserable world and all its evil and sin, you are utterly at a loss—you know not what to think, nor to hope, nor to fear. It is to deliver you, if it may be, from this state, that we set before you the great doctrines of Redemption, which have for us solved that riddle: and solved it, not by any mere theoretical proposition or set of propositions, but by a great practical revelation, calculated as much to change our own hearts and lives, as it has changed the face of things around us. And it is that you may the more appreciate what we have to say of this great revelation of God, its importance and its blessedness, its value to mankind and its value to you, that I have spent this opening portion of my Sermon in shewing you your hopeless and aimless state without it.

The Son of God was then in the form of God: glorious as the Father, equal to the Father: the Creator and upholder of the universe. Now the head of his creation was MAN; man endued with intelligence, free will, power to stand in obedience, power to fall into disobedience. Which way that power would be exercised, was no secret from Him to whom all things are known from the beginning. And therefore man's fall, and all the consequences of that fall, we must ever regard as foreseen and provided for in the divine counsels from the beginning. Nor in thus saying am I going one step beyond Scripture itself. Have we not again and again expressions like this,—“the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world”—“the Kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world”—“the Lamb's book of life written before the foundation of the world?”—Well then, whatever I know of Christ's design in Redemption, I know not as an after-thought in His mind, not as a result rendered necessary by the entrance of sin and death, but as an eternal purpose, belonging to his very Nature and Person from the beginning. And just thus our text puts it forth. He was in the form of God. Notwithstanding, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God; i. e., for the words are obscure as they now stand, He deemed not his equality with God a matter eagerly to be grasped by him;—did not think of it as the

robber does of his prey, so that he would not on any account let it go : esteemed it not matter of self-enrichment or self-indulgence. Such seems, on nearer examination, to be the meaning of this somewhat difficult clause. His divine glory and majesty were not to him as the treasure to the miser : He did not so envelop himself in them as never to let them go : He looked even on them as willing, if need be, to detach them from himself, if he might thus the better fulfil the great end of his divine being—the expression of the Father's will, and the shewing forth of the brightness of his glory. And is not this already wonderful, beyond the limits of human conception ? In proportion to the real worth of the possession apprehended by the possessor, is its value in his sight. Here was the greatest of all possessions : here was a possessor who knew all things : who had counted, so to speak, and had ever in his mind every jewel in that crown of unapproachable glory which he had with the Father. His it was, before creation began : His it was, now that myriads of happy beings circled his throne with praises, and innumerable orbs of brightness ran their courses rejoicing around him. But he set no value on it. It was not his aim—not his chief joy : nor was it his eternal purpose, to dwell and reign in this glory undisturbed. From everlasting he was not only the Son, but the Saviour : not

only the Creator, but the Redeemer of his creatures. All his acts of majesty and power were but preludes to the work of Redemption.

And now let us descend down into time, and watch that work as it is described in our text. He did not regard his equality with God as a prey to be retained, as a matter of self-enrichment eagerly to be grasped ; but it is added, he made himself of no reputation,—literally, he emptied himself. And this in the strictest sense describes that which he did. It is a declaration not perhaps enough regarded. “He made himself of no reputation” is apt to convey the idea that it is merely his character among men, his repute from others, which is spoken of: whereas it is not any thing that others thought of him that is spoken of, but that which he did to himself, and caused himself to be. He emptied himself: laid aside, not his divine nature, for that was his very being—not his divine Person as the Son of God—not his purity and holiness, for these were the essential elements of his divine nature and Person,—but all accessories to these,—all power, all majesty, all renown ; yea and what is more mysterious still to our apprehension, all that infinite knowledge of all things with which, as God and Creator, he was clothed. It would be perhaps an over bold thing to assert this, were it not the positive declaration of Scripture itself. “Jesus,” we are told, “as a child, increased in

wisdom and stature:" and when now his ministry was at its close, and he was about to be offered, we have it from his own lips, that of the day and hour of his second coming "knew no man, not even the angels in heaven, no nor even the Son, but the Father only." Nor is this all. He emptied himself not only of his power and his glory and his wisdom, but also of his inherent and eternal claim to the love and favour of the Father. This is equally plain in the verse just cited of St. Luke: "Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in *favour with God* and man." It is not now the place to enter into the detail of the reasons why all this was done, and the end accomplished by it. These will come before us, please God, on another occasion. But to-day we speak of these astounding facts themselves. He emptied himself. He left the throne of heaven, cast aside all that he had, all that could by the very laws of his eternal being, be detached from himself, and was, of his own free will, cast as some shipwrecked one, on the inhospitable shore of this rough world. Nay, our text goes even further than this. We learn much more of the inanition, of the exile, of the Son of God. That a glorious vessel should be set aside from its honoured use, empty and unregarded, is one step of disparagement: but that it should be degraded to common uses, and reckoned among the vile and worthless, is another and a further

step. "He emptied himself, and took on him," or "He emptied himself by taking on him, the form of a servant; and was made in the likeness of men." From being equal with God, He became the servant of God; not merely as ever in accordance with, and the expression of, but subordinate to and simply obeying, the will of the Father. Perhaps we do not apprehend this again sufficiently, in reading and thinking of the earthly course of our Lord. His own words are full of it, especially in that Gospel where he speaks most of his own purposes and his errand in redemption. "He that sent me" is the constant appellation by which he speaks of the Father. "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." "Father, I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." "This commandment received I from my Father." His course was, from Bethlehem to Calvary, one of humble obedience. He thought not, spoke not, acted not, of himself. His very greatest miracles were wrought by him not as of his own power, but as by the Father's power. His words, as we saw on a former occasion, continually indicate the position which He holds as distinguished from the sons of men, and from his own ministering servants in after times: but no where do we find this link of

holy obedience severed, which binds him to the Father. At all the great crises of his life, we find him in prayer. When he is about to relieve human misery, he looks up to heaven and sighs. When he stands at the tomb of Lazarus, he prays, in order that it may be known that the Father had sent him. While being nailed to the cross, he prays for his executioners. When risen from the dead, he speaks of "my Father and your Father, my God and your God:" he tells them of "the times and seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." And now that he hath had given him a name that is above every name, he hath not put off the form of a servant, but is waiting, till all things are put under his feet: humbly abiding the fulness of the Father's time, to enter on his glorious Kingdom. Christ glorified not himself. It was "Father, glorify thou me." From the beginning of Redemption and at every successive step, there was the abnegation of self-guidance, self-regard, and the dropping into a subordinate place: "my Father is greater than I." "Abide ye in my commandments, and continue in my love—even as I have kept my Father's commandments and continue in His love." Let us fix this well in our minds, that the Son of God not only emptied himself of his glory, but took on him the form of a servant. But again, our text proceeds further to

particularize how, in what special character, with what set of incumbent duties and trials, this course of obedience was carried out. As far as we have hitherto gone, his purpose of self-abnegation and obedience might have been accomplished by his descending into the ranks of angelic being, which his own hands had made, which were all subservient to the Father's will, and employed in doing his work. But, for reasons which I dwell not on now, because I wish our thoughts to-day to be fixed on him, and the simple fact of his great work of self-sacrifice, the nature of angels would not have been fitting for the accomplishment of his work of redemption: "He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him" the likeness of a race lower than the angels, a race which had gone astray from God, a race whose very name had become in heaven a word of shame: a race of whom it is written, that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." O brethren, we in vain endeavour to form any idea of this vast descent into degradation of the Son of God. We take his humiliation in detail, as better suiting our narrow and limited capacities. We recount each contradiction of sinners, each pang of flesh and spirit, each instance of human infirmity, and we think of each, rightly, as of some great and astonishing

thing to be endured by the mighty God who made and upheld the world: but we forget, that the original resolve of Redemption contained in itself all these; and contained them not merely as consequences—not merely as we might by one leading step involve ourselves in the consequences of a hundred others, but contained every one of them as absolutely fore-known and seen—counted and weighed,—deliberated on and consented to, by the Son of God. When He, in his glory and his joy, took on him the character of Redeemer, he knew what was in man, He saw all the depths of depravity, all the wonders of selfishness, all the pollutions of sin, of which this our nature was capable, and to which it would degrade itself: and he shrunk not from contact with, from identification with, the vessel which had been thus defiled: he knew what would be said and done to him, and it terrified him not; it turned not away, it ruffled not for a moment the steady current of his mighty Love. O, dear friends, we shall never know what Christ's humiliation was, till we know what his exaltation and his glory ^{is}. The eye which cannot bear the light above, is dazzled and misted, when it contemplates the depth and darkness below.

But let us for a few moments think on these words, “He was made in the likeness of men:” not with a view to following out this doctrine of

the Incarnation into its distinctions and limitations, which we hope to do on another occasion—but just to dwell on the main assertion itself. He WAS MADE: became—underwent all this change of which we have spoken; from being a glorious uncreated being, became enshrined in a created nature, became, as to his outward form, a creature and subject to the laws of the creature—hunger, weariness, pain, death. And in that human soul which he also took to him, he was made liable to grief, and disappointment, and fear, and anguish. That he not only became liable to these, but drained the cup of them to the uttermost, lies beyond the field of our consideration at present; belongs to the recital of that which He did and suffered in our nature;—it is to a point less often thought of that I am now directing your attention; to the fact, that he undertook and underwent the mighty change which made him all this. We can hardly realize the thought in our minds, and do not recall it often enough. Take him at any point of his human course here below—any point of his humiliation and his work of redemption. See him in the likeness of men—walking and conversing, and passed by others, as if he were veritably a man like ourselves; and then recall all that has been said respecting him; his pre-existent glory, his Creatorship, his great purpose of love in entering this world,—the mighty act of self-abnega-

tion which had brought him where he is; and then reflect, that all this was in the very nature and character of the Son of God, his especial work and his appointed course of triumph and glory. See that despised man, poor and humble, rejected and hated, and reflect, that this meanness, this lowering of his dignity, this blotting of his brightness, shall be the best and loveliest, yea the one dominant gem, in his eternal crown of ineffable majesty, and the ever-deepening theme of the praise of the universe through the ages of ages:—fix, if you can, your thoughts upon this,—and I feel that none of us can at all adequately thus fix them, in our vanity and our desultoriness and our worldliness:—but I do know this, that in proportion as we do, just in that proportion does self retire back, and the world become insignificant, and pleasure lose its zest, and luxury become distasteful, and all other things and sayings pass into our looser thoughts and secondary regards: and that one figure, in its humility and its majesty, becomes nearer, and broader, and deeper marked, and more clearly defined, even till it fills the field of view, and conceals, or includes, all else besides. And this is the effect which I would wish to leave on your minds, dear friends, this morning: the feeling and persuasion that this which the Son of God did and underwent, is the one fact of heaven and earth, with which

none in creation, none in history, none in your own personal being, can for a moment be compared, but in the presence and in the light of which all these ought to be contemplated and included: that it is the great object of faith and practice for every one among you. Of faith—for upon the personal and hearty reception of it as the foundation of your life before God, that life itself, and all its prospects, depend: of practice—for high above all other examples, shining over them, and blessing, while it surpasses them, is this mighty example of the Son of God. With this view our text itself is put forth by the Spirit: introduced by the words, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”—“look not every man on his own things, but also on the things of others.” O brethren, how the selfish man and the selfish woman and the selfish family ought to depart from such a theme as this downcast for very shame, and abased at their unlikeness to the pattern which they profess to be imitating. Would to God that such thoughts might work in their minds this day; that they might bethink themselves, in the midst of the comfort and splendour of an age when the example of Christ seems almost obsolete and forgotten, whether they are at all striving to be like Him—whether, professing to hope in Him, they are approaching at all nearer to him in lives of faith and love. O that this question may be

fixed and rankle like a dart in their bosoms, even till it will take no answer but the surrender of the life to Him, and, by the daily grace of his Spirit, living as He lived.

For to be like Him, by having his image formed within us, by the dethronement of self and the setting up of Him, is the only thing really worth living for: and again, to be like Him, by seeing him as he is and being transformed into his glory, is the one thing at any time worth dying for: the hope and the blessing of a glorious eternity. And none can have this hope in Him, now or hereafter, who do not purify themselves even as He is pure.

SERMON IV.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

1856.

ACTS x. 42.

“He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.”

It may seem perhaps to be somewhat anticipating the order of our course on the Person and Office of our Lord, to speak of Him as Judge, before we have entered into those particulars of his work of redemption by which in his human nature he has arrived at his supreme exaltation. But I wish rather to present him in his various great offices and characters before you, than to go formally onward as in a history, evolving step by step: and it may be well to take to-day as especially fitting the present season, this his office of Judge, completing also as it does that class of characters of him in which we have seen him already as

Creator and Redeemer. In doing this then, first the fact itself comes before us—that it is Christ, and no other, who shall judge the world. And on this head nothing can be more decisive than is the testimony of Scripture. Witness our Lord's own sublime description of the events of the great final period of judgment, which he opens "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." And such is his constant testimony. "Hereafter," was his declaration to the High Priest and council, "shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." And to come more directly to the point of judgment as his office,—we have him saying, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." Moreover he describes himself, and his Apostles describe him, as exercising the office of Judge in pronouncing on the final state of men. "At that day I will say unto them," are his own words, "Depart from me, for I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity." And St. Paul declares, "We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ." So that it is not demonstration, that the doctrine of Christ's Judgeship needs. But it does, I think, need laying forth and enforcing, because

like many other of the distinctive doctrines of Christianity, it is apt to be merged and forgotten in a general and vague way of speaking and thinking. Just as few Christians, when they speak of God as the Creator of the world, have any distinct idea that it is Christ of whom they are speaking, so few Christians, when they speak of the final Judgment, have any distinct idea, familiar as is the truth itself to them, that it is Jesus who shall occupy that judgment-throne. It is thus that we allow the distinctive doctrines of our faith to drop out, and subside into a kind of Deism, from which the presence of Him by whose name we are called is suffered to fade away, till our faith in him becomes no more a living and working principle, a cleaving to one who is ever with us, but a cold assent to theological propositions. I believe I am describing a case very common in the present day. You may search through whole books about the world and Him who made it, and not find a word about Christ in them. You may search again through whole books on human responsibility and moral obligation, and not find one word about Him who died for us being our judge, or of the peculiar ties of gratitude and responsibility which bind Christians to Him. What wonder if Christian motives be absent, where Christian truths are so little thought of? If no man cometh to the Father but by and through Christ: if He is the ap-

pointed mediator between God and man, so that we cannot think of God acting in us, or of ourselves approaching to God, except by his intervention: it may be a solemn thought for Christians, whether they are not in fact thwarting the designs and effects of redemption by thus leaving Him out of view.

Let us then dwell on this point, on which both Scripture and the creeds of the church, which are founded on Scripture, are so explicit: that it is He which is appointed of God to be Judge both of the quick and the dead.

Now first of all I conceive that one of the texts just quoted may tend to throw great light on our subject. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Let us try in some measure to enter into and comprehend this. The Son of God is the Head and Lord of all creation. In Him, the Father is well pleased, beholding as summed up in Him all things in heaven and in earth and under the earth, whether visible or invisible. All these are by Him, and for Him. The Father hath given all things into his hand. By Him alone have God's creatures access to the Father: by Him alone does the Father act on this created universe. All the laws of creation, all the course of providence, all the purposes of grace, are cared for, and wrought out to their issue, by the watchful ministry of Him whose they are, viz. the

eternal Son of God, in sweet and constant accord with the Father's will. Now among these high offices of upholding and superintending, that of judgment, if we give the matter a thought, is one of the most obvious. That the same almighty and all-wise one who has created, who has upheld, who has carried onward the whole frame of nature from her first hour to her last, should also determine and announce the final lot of his creatures, seems but what is just and right and to be expected. So that the Father judgeth none, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. But the Son of God has other and closer claim to be judge of mankind. Another text declares to us, from his own lips also, that "the Father hath given him authority to execute judgment also, *because he is the Son of man.*" As it is fitting on the one hand, that we should be judged by one who is all-wise and infallible, so it is on the other according to God's merciful provision for fair and full justice to be done to his creatures, that that all-wise one should be one of ourselves—one who has personally experienced our infirmities, and whose decisions are not only marked by perfect impartiality and even justice, but come forth from and are clothed in that lively sympathy which only personal participation can ever bestow. But yet more—He is *man*, and he is the Head of our human nature: he is the rightful pur-

chaser of it all by virtue of his work, in it accomplished. He has brought it up through a course of humble obedience and perfect sinlessness into triumph and glory: he has redeemed it from its guilt at the price of his own precious blood: he has made it victorious over death and hell in his own person. And he stands in his right as king and judge of manhood by this especial claim, that he is Son of man; *that one* of human race, on whom all the race depend; the Captain of their salvation; the Author and finisher of their faith. And thus we find the Apostles constantly resting the Judgeship of the Lord Jesus on this accomplishment of his work of redemption and this his place in the nature of man. So, e. g., St. Paul, when he stood preaching on that hill at Athens, surrounded by the philosophers, says that God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world by (or *in*) the man whom he hath appointed. So again the same Apostle, in the famous passage to the Philippians, "Wherefore," i. e. because of his humiliation and obedience to death, "God also hath highly exalted him." And again to the Colossians, ch. i. 18, "He is the head of the body the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead: that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." And to the Ephesians, i. 20, "He raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in

the heavenly places far above all principality and power and might, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the Church.”

We see then that both by natural right, and by a special claim acquired and superinduced on that, the Son of God is judge of mankind: the natural right putting—as Creator—all things into his hand, and man among those, as their final arranger and disposer: the acquired claim giving an especial fitness to his being judge of men, inasmuch as they are his own peculiar possession, and the family of which he is the undoubted and manifested Head.

But there are some subordinate and lesser reasons why He, and no other, should be the judge of mankind. He unites in himself those proprieties for the high office, which none other could. The judgment will be for the deeds done in the body, and will not take place till the dead are again united to their bodies. It will be a judgment carried on not only by the convictions of the conscience, but by an actual visible and audible process, eye to eye and voice to voice. And this is according to justice, nay, to necessity: because they who have lived in the body should give account in the body. We know little, almost nothing, of the life of a disembodied spirit: but we can say

thus much, that from it would be absent the glow of rapture or of confusion, the kindling eye, the greeting voice : that a judgment of the spirit for things done in the body, would seem to be an incomplete taking of account of the state and deserts of mankind. And after all, however uncertain such *à priori* considerations may be, we have them here in their proper place, as only coming in aid of God's own declared purpose of judging men in their bodies, and after the general resurrection. Several times in Holy Writ is this process of the judgment put before us. From the suffering Job who wished his words graven with a diamond in the rock when he said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," down to the Evangelist in the Apocalypse, Scripture is full of testimony that in our flesh we shall see our Judge : that every eye shall behold him. The whole imagery is that of a scene transacted outwardly and visibly. The tribes yet living on the earth, with their natural eyesight, shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud with great power and glory. At his coming, the dead shall be raised, in the same manner and guise as He was raised, who was the first-born from the dead : as the first-fruits, so the harvest. As He was in his risen body, able to be seen and heard and handled and recognized, so shall it be with them also. The living shall, it is true, undergo a change : yet it will not be the

severance of soul and body, but only such change as to put them also into the state of the resurrection without having gone through death; such a change as has past upon Enoch and Elijah, who were translated alive into glory. And then, among this vast multitude, He himself shall sit as judge, visible, and audible, and recognized by all. Now it is obvious that such a scene could only be enacted, such condition only fulfilled, by the incarnate Son of God. "God hath no man seen at any time." The Father dwelleth in light inaccessible; Him no man hath seen nor can see. We have never heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And if it be replied, that there is nothing in this argument, for that God could make himself visible and audible if it pleased him, I answer, that such speculation is out of place altogether in this instance, for God *has* made himself visible and audible in a way of his own appointing, and in that way only; even by his Son, incarnate in our flesh. The same declaration from John i., which I just now cited, "God hath no man seen at any time," concludes by saying, "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he declared him"—manifested him—shewed him forth to his creatures. So that by the necessity of the case, I mean, by God's eternal laws of self-manifestation to his creatures, none other than the incarnate Son of God can be

the Judge of mankind: can stand visible and audible on this earth of ours, exercising over us all a right of disposal, inherent in him because he is our Creator: purchased and assured to him, because he is our Redeemer: full of justice, for as God he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and as man he is spotless and without sin: full of mercy, for as God he has compassion on the works of his hands, and as man he has felt what it is to be tempted. We cannot conceive any quality which any man could require for his final judge and disposer, which is not found in the Lord Jesus.

It is plain that we might carry these considerations of his fitness for Judge yet further into particulars. We might say, that it would be requisite that for such a final assurance of God's people and conviction of God's enemies, One should be the chief agent, who might cause the greatest possible joy in the one, and the greatest possible remorse and dismay in the other. For remember, *that* judgment will be set to redress the wrongs of the whole lifetime of the world. There will be there myriads of holy men and holy women, who toiled on through oppression and neglect and tears, and were borne up by faith in this final result. "Plead thou my cause, O Lord," was the language of their daily prayers: on this Holy One who died for them did they put their trust, that at

last they should not be confounded. God's justice requires, God's covenant provides, that to them shall be given double for all their toil. If their cup of joy run not over in this final day, then is the balance not righted, the world's wound not healed, the expectation of the righteous not fulfilled: and how should their joy be full, but by the presence of Him whom they love? How should their pardon be sealed, but by the voice of the Lamb who died for them? How should their anthem of triumph be loudest and sweetest, but by beholding Him who is worthy to receive blessing and glory and honour; Him who inhabiteth the praises of eternity? And on the other side, there will be there the armies of the aliens; the bold and stout-hearted; those who would not have this man to reign over them: they who pierced him once, and they who have been piercing him ever since: they who have served him for the world's hire, and used his liberty for a cloke of licentiousness; who have called themselves his disciples without keeping his commandments, have exacted his words from others without believing them themselves, and lived in self-enjoyment, while called by his name. How shall they be judged, in the absence of Him whom they have wronged? How shall they be judged, but by that suffering and exalted One, whom they called "Lord, Lord," but obeyed not? Could any sight be thought of,

which should so strike them through with remorse, as that of Him with whom all their lives have trifled? Could any voice be heard which should so carry conviction to their hearts, as that one, speaking on earth, which speaking from heaven they have so long disregarded? And if the memory of opportunities thrown away and benefits forgot, be ever the bitterest drop in the cup of self-accusation, what must be to them the presence of Him who died, but they would not live: who was wounded, but they would not be healed by him: who was chastised, but not for their peace, because they would not?

But have we any check upon such thoughts as these; any warrant that judgment shall not degenerate into mere vengeance; that almighty power shall be tempered with sweet mercy—that not a blow shall descend that day, but those which the assembled universe shall confess to be just? Yes, we have every warrant; for we have Him as Judge, who prayed for his own murderers: Him who opened Paradise to the penitent on the cross: Him who let himself be touched by the unclean; who restored the fallen, who heard the broken-hearted; him who never broke the bruised reed nor quenched the smoking flax. And whenever I think of him on that throne of judgment, and pass over in my mind the awful events of that day, and the question arises, How can the redeemed re-

joice, how tune their hallelujah chorus of praise, amidst so much utter and final misery? How can the hosts of God stand on the shore of time, and gaze on that world's sunset, if it go down tinged with so much blood? how look forward to the glorious morning, if it bring so many vacant places, so many dreary remembrances? When thoughts like these pass through my mind, and become too strong for me, and I flee cowering to the judgment-throne to hide in almighty wisdom and infinite mercy,—O then I see there a sight which calms my doubts and assures my fears: I see Him who when reviled reviled not again: who when he suffered threatened not; and seeing Him there, I know that all will be well: I know that for every infirmity, every inadvertence, every stumble and fall, He will make ample and blessed allowance: I know that all was open to his eye, all treasured in His heart: that He never misunderstood a simple motive, never overlooked a loving thought, never exaggerated a casual fault: that the death-bed of shame, the dark cell of punishment, the crouching form of misery and sin, were to him no closed books, whence his word was banished: that He judged not by the hard and rugged outside, but knew every tender thought within; took not the world, nor the church, for his guides in judgment, but saw deeper than either. And when I remember all this, and look up and see

standing by him, yea by his very throne, many whose names were cast out by our righteous ones, and many a battalion glittering in triumph, whom we in this world were too ready to consign to perdition, then am I reassured, and can look forward even to that day with contentment: well satisfied that when its great work is done, and its evening comes, he will be held justified in his judgments, and glorified in his mercies: yea, that then, as ever in his dealings, mercy shall rejoice against judgment. Solemn might be the strain, even though it were on the jubilee of redemption, which celebrated only the triumph of his justice; subdued the voices, even though of the great multitude whom no man can number, which sing only of righteousness fulfilled: but knowing who it is that is to judge us, what He has done for us, what spirit He is of, I can see now that there will be no such stint in the utterance of the praises of his church: that infinite gratitude and glad surprise, and exultation at his vast and unexpected mercies, will cause that song to swell forth unchecked from all his redeemed, will make it indeed a new song which none before could utter; will swell it onward without measure, and fill eternity with praise.

But we must not conclude without saying something on the time and manner of that judgment of which we have been speaking.

As regards the first, its day and hour are hidden in the counsels of the Father. No man knows them, not even the angels in heaven, no, nor the Son himself, but the Father only. Even He is waiting, till all things be put under his feet. Even He has not in this respect past out of his mediatorial and subordinate office. And for us, the sons of men, all attempts minutely to fix even with the aid of prophecy the day of his coming, have ever proved vain and unprofitable. Again and again in the course of history, have men told the year: and again and again has the predicted time past by, and the interpreters been baffled. Many of us are old enough to remember two or three such attempts. Even now we find this and that year spoken of by our writers on the prophetic word. All we can say in each case is, it may be so. All we know for certain is, that we have his own word for two things respecting it, the one of which we may well set against the other as a corrective, and both of which form solemn incentives to watchfulness. The first is, that when that day is near, there will be plain and undeniable signs of its approach: as plain to those who are watching for them, as the budding of the trees is a token that summer is nigh. The other is, that when the day actually does come, it will be sudden and unexpected: as a thief breaking the house at dead of night. In other words, the Church will, on

the one hand, not be left uninformed of the signs of her Lord's near approach : and on the other, she will not, as matter of fact, lay those signs so deeply to heart as to be thoroughly awakened and on the look out for him. A few remarkable particulars in our Lord's own declarations and in past history must also not be overlooked. The day of which we speak has in fact been, in a foretaste and awful type, acted over already. When our Lord speaks prophetically of it, he ever mingles with its mention his ultimate judgment of the Jewish people. Sometimes the two seem to overlap and interpenetrate one another, so that we cannot tell which is the immediate subject : and when the lesser event is beyond doubt spoken of, it is not unfrequently clothed in many of the terrors of the greater. At this no Christian will be surprised. The historic lifetime of Israel sets forth to us the fortunes of the Church of God. Israel rejected her Lord : and at the house and temple of God did his judgment begin. In every incident of that terrible time, we read the great and final consummation prefigured.

Another of these particulars which we have from his own lips, is, that before his second coming, the Gospel shall have been preached, for a witness, to all nations. And the progress of this is perhaps the safest and most reliable token for us of the nearness or distance of that

day. How rapidly the work is advancing, how near completion it has approached, any one who watches the course of Christian missions is able to judge: and may, if judging with soberness and not with enthusiasm, form a safe inference accordingly. Another token which he has given us, both by his own declarations, and more fully by the Apostle St. Paul, is that that day shall not come except there have been a falling away first, and the man of sin have been revealed. We have not yet I believe seen the full accomplishment of this prophecy. We have seen many things which have seemed to approach, but none which has attained, the terrible and general opposition to God and all that is his, which this passage seems to imply. For this we yet wait; and when it comes, we shall know its import as the herald of the Lord's approach: the last and darkest cloud, out of which shall burst the glorious Sun of Righteousness.

Various themes crowd upon us, as we bring to a close these thoughts on the Son of God as our Judge. But let us concentrate them all in one home question: How shall *we* stand before him? Remember that in all senses carrying terror or doubt as to the issue, His own people shall not come into judgment. They have already past from death unto life: they are knit into and united to him on whom they believe, and to whose image they are being conformed. As in that terrible prefigurement of

the great day, the Christian church, forewarned by the Lord, had escaped and was safely lodged in a city of refuge, comforted with his presence and ringing with his praise: even so shall it be in the great day of the Son of man's coming. They who have loved and lived on Him, will stand secure above all the anguish and terror and uncertainty and questioning and trembling of the tribes of the earth. Their city of refuge has long been built; its towers set up, its bulwarks told: salvation will God appoint for those walls and bulwarks: the storm shall rage without them, and they shall be safe. Not that for them his office of Judge is abandoned or foregone. But that for them who are judged by the Spirit here, whose lives lie open in holy purity of purpose and constant self-searching and the communion of prayer with God, that judgment will be as it were superseded; they shall not come into it; they have already passed from death into life.

Be it your endeavour, brethren, and mine, to follow up these meditations on Christ as our Judge, by making him more and more our friend—by growing in his grace and in the knowledge of him; that when the tokens of his coming thicken around us, when the clouds grow darker, and the trumpets wax louder, and men's hearts fail them for fear, we may lift up our heads with joy, seeing that our salvation is nigh.

SERMON V.

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

1856.

LUKE ii. 25.

“Waiting for the consolation of Israel.”

IN continuing my course of sermons on the Person and Office of our Lord, I shall sometimes diverge a little from the systematic treatment of the subject to consider those titles of Him which, scattered up and down in Scripture, convey to us so much of his character and gracious relations towards us. We shall be thus as it were cheered on our journey by plucking the flowers with which God has lined the way,—by contemplating their beauty and tasting their fragrance. And such sermons will form as it were pendants to the main course, illustrating the various seasons and wants of our fleeting and needy lives which He, the fountain of inexhaustible grace, is able and willing to bless and to supply.

Now we have in the text one of these titles,

full of rich and blessed meaning, and eminently suited to the tone and temper of our thoughts at the present season. For we are now commemorating his birth into the world, and these words were spoken of him at that time. We are now also at the close of another year of our lives, and more than at other times need that consolation which he is here said to be.

Our text describes the character and attitude of an aged servant of God at the time of our Lord's birth in this world. "There was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon: and the same was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him." The former part of the description, that he was just and devout, naturally precedes the notice given in our text: the latter part, that the Holy Ghost was upon him, stamps with the divine approval his attitude of expectation: shews that it of all others was the temper of mind which the Spirit of God loves and consorts with.

With these few remarks to introduce the subject, let us now ask ourselves what it is that is here described by the words "the consolation of Israel." Israel was God's own people. Constituted in their first father Abraham, blessed with various renewals of the promise, and the covenant, from that time onwards, they had long formed the one bright spot in the midst of the darkness of the nations. God was with

them. His arm was their stay. His promises were their inheritance. He was their God. They could quote his dealings with their fathers. "Their ears had heard, and their fathers had declared unto them, the mighty works which God had done in their days, and in the old time before them." As we picture to ourselves the Jew of old, dwelling in the land of promise in which God had planted him, under his vine and fig-tree, with none to make him afraid,—as we see him teaching to his children the wonders and mercies of Israel's God, and as we compare him with the most powerful hero of classic story, or the most refined intellectual son of Greece, we see a mighty difference indeed. For all the duties, for all the trials, for all the sufferings of life, what had the Greek, what had the Roman, to furnish him, as compared with the poorest peasant in Israel? with one who could go forth in the strength of the Lord his God, and make mention of his righteousness only; who could stay himself on his God in trial, and in suffering could say, "It is Jehovah, my Covenant God: let him do what seemeth him good." Which of them could ever cry out, as death drew on, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord?" Of which of them could it ever be said, amidst all the void and unsatisfied yearnings of this life, "When I awake up after thy likeness I shall be satisfied?"

So that, as compared with the nations round, Israel's consolation was already abundant. Still, Israel had, and looked for, a consolation to come. God's people differed in this also from every people on earth. The brightness and glory of every Gentile race was *past*. Their ancestors, they held, had been gods and the children of gods—and from that time gradual degeneracy had set in. But Israel's glory was ever in the *future*. All their songs of triumph, all their psalms of praise, all their hymns of resignation, look onward. Their language is always speaking in the future. Hence sprang in old time, and hence springs even in this day of Israel's exile and unbelief and shame, the inflexible endurance which has ever been their distinguishing mark among the people: that "sufferance," which is "the badge of all their tribe." They looked for a deliverer; for one of whom their first covenant promises spoke, of whom their psalms and prophets were full, to whom every sacrifice and ordinance pointed. They looked forward to him: not indeed as we look back upon him, but in many cases perhaps in ignorance of His real Person and Office. Still I believe on the one hand, that this ignorance was not in general so deep as has been sometimes imagined: and on the other, that the faithful and spiritual Jew had far more exact views of the character of the Redeemer than we are usually disposed to think. What *we* are able to see by

the light of written revelation, was made up to *him* by the special enlightening of the Holy Ghost. Thus when we have read of Simeon, that "he was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel," it is added, "and the Holy Ghost was upon him:" inspiring him, and enabling him to look forward to those great spiritual effects of the Redeemer's coming which he expressed to the mother of Jesus; the fall and rising again of many in Israel; the piercing of a sword through the soul, the revealing of the thoughts of many hearts. And other signs indicate the same fact—that the faithful in Israel did not look merely for earthly promises. "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" is the title by which the Baptist points out Jesus as the Messiah to the multitudes who thronged to his baptism: an expression well known among them, and carrying definite meaning to their minds. "He shall save his people from their sins," is the announcement of the angel to Joseph, before the holy child was born into the world. Now all this invests with far greater interest the description in our text. We have a right to assume that Simeon was looking and waiting, not for a mighty prince to deliver Israel from the yoke of Rome, not for a consolation under the oppression of a foreign yoke, but for a deliverer from the bondage of sin; for a con-

solation of the weary souls of his people : in short, though the precise manner was not revealed to him, for just that consolation which Christ is ministering day by day and year by year to as many of us as believe in him and serve him. Thus this aged servant of God seems to be identified in faith and hope with ourselves ; and the description given of him in our text becomes not merely indicative of the state of the faithful in Israel then, but suggestive also of the true state of all the faithful in Christendom now. “Waiting for the consolation of Israel” is just as much a present description, as a past one. And this consolation of Israel, again, what was it ? What, but the appearing of Christ ? For when Simeon had seen the child Jesus, he at once recognized that for which he had been waiting : the sight of his eyes was filled, the desire of his soul was satisfied : he cried out—“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace : for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” It was the personal Jesus, and no other, who was the consolation of Israel. As he lay a helpless babe in Simeon’s arms, the consolation was, that God had fulfilled the promise made to their fathers ; that grace, mercy and peace should flow forth from that child to generations yet unborn ; that He should be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of God’s people Israel. Prophecy

had long ago asserted this his office of consoler, "Behold, a man shall be an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." And again by the same prophet Isaiah he is made to say "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me: for he hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound: to comfort all that mourn: to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Nor was our Lord himself wanting in speaking and acting as the appointed consolation of Israel. It was once asked of him, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" And having given his reply in a wonderful discourse full of words of grace and wisdom, he concluded all by saying "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." His actions too, during his life on earth and among Israel, are full of the same declaration. If grief came in his way, he cheered it: he went about doing good, and relieving all manner of sickness and disease among the people. "Weep not" was his language, not once only, but whenever he came in contact with the sorrows of man-

kind. "Let not your heart be troubled" was the opening of his parting discourse to his disciples. And he upheld them in the prospect of his bodily absence, by the promise of another present Comforter who should abide with them for ever: not however thereby delegating his blessed office, for that Comforter is his Spirit, proceeding and coming from Him—and the presence of that Comforter is the blessed result of faith in Him.

When then we use the words "the consolation of Israel," we mean Christ, in the fullness of his constituted Person and Office as the Comforter of His people. And when we say "waiting for the consolation of Israel," we imply that attitude of expectation, anxious looking for, hearty desire of, this consolation, which comes from, and *is* in fact, Christ himself.

And now let us pursue this consolation more into its details in the Christian's heart and life, and endeavour to shew its reality and effectiveness.

First then, Christ is the consolation of his people, inasmuch as He DELIVERS THEM FROM THE BONDAGE OF SIN. In the history of that nation which was a parable for the Church of God, this mighty deliverance was prefigured by their bringing up out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. There they groaned under the yoke of slavery. But God delivered them by a mighty hand and an outstretched

arm : and though that deliverance was marked as much by their fickleness and ingratitude to Him, as by his mercies to them, yet He deserted not his people, but led them safely through all the perils of the wilderness, and ultimately planted them in the land which he had promised to their fathers. And correspondent, but far more glorious, is the deliverance which Christ accomplishes for those who wait for and receive his consolation, even till we depart in peace, having seen his salvation,—and the consolation which we have waited for is poured in all its fulness around us. If we be found constantly in such a frame, the past will have no terror for us, the future no alarm : amidst the decay of natural strength, and the dropping off of earthly comforts, and the removal of dear friends, we shall endure undismayed : and whether the coming year bring to us joy or sorrow, health or sickness, life or death, of one thing we are sure,—that it will carry us nearer to, or perhaps into the presence of, him whom we love : that it will either confirm to us here, or realize for ever, the consolation for which we have waited. From their state of bondage in sin, he sets his people free : from their conscious and their unconscious bondage. Israel was to be deeply pitied, crying out under their taskmasters : but Israel would have been far more deeply to be pitied, had they not cried out. Passive suffering is ever a

step lower than reluctant suffering. Now as sinners, we are in both these states at once. Some of our sins we feel as a heavy burden: others we are equally enslaved to, but do not feel at all. While the disease afflicts some parts of our inner being with pain, other parts it benumbs and paralyzes. But Christ's consolation is sufficient for both these evils. It relieves the sting of sin felt, and reveals the presence of sin unfelt. It is the true and only real comfort, which does not say peace when there is no peace, but first unveils the misery to its depths, and then proceeds to heal. His Spirit begins his work in a man by convicting him of sin: and, my dear friends, if you know any thing of this consolation of which we speak, you know this probing, this enlightening power of the work of Christ. Where you thought yourself secure and in health, the word of God, or the working of His power within you, has detected unsoundness, and spiritual peril. You thought it was your own will which was actuating you, and you did not see the chain so cunningly bound round, you did not see the taskmaster so constantly standing over you. But the Searcher of hearts came to you, and the mist dropped from your eyes, and you saw that you were a bondman, and not free: that another was your master, not yourself. This was the beginning of his consolation of you, to shew you your misery. And are we apt to

complain that in many cases it has, or seems to have, proceeded no further? that the Lord has shewn us ourselves, but has not shewn us Himself—that the great Physician has abundantly probed the wound, but has not begun to soothe and to heal? O, if so, we are the more prepared to receive and to appreciate the description in our text,—*waiting* for the consolation of Israel: then we can tell what the Psalmist meant when he said, “my soul waiteth for thee, as they that wait for the morning.” But let us not be too ready to grant such a supposition as this which we have been making, that Christ is in the habit, in his work on the soul, of smiting and not healing. It is not really so: but where the convicted sinner has been left in this state, it has generally been just because he has thwarted and stopped short Christ’s consoling work. Let Him have his gracious way, and the consolation will proceed. Give Him thine heart; be willing to sit at his feet, and be taught of him, and not misery, but peace shall be the consequence of his Spirit’s convicting work within thee. Look not down ever, but look up at Him. Gaze not ever on his hand that smites, but on his face that beams with love. Look not constantly inwards on thyself, but outwards at that which is doing around thee—his gracious arrangements, his precious promises, his glorious triumphant Person, his blessed Office of thine High Priest and advocate: reflect, that

all these are thine: thine by thy right and claim in him, which right and claim these very pangs of conviction within thee prove that he is recognizing, and unfolding in all its reality. And O, when He is thus apprehended by the soul, and made to a man deliverance and redemption, how blessed a consolation is it! The sense that though I am weak, I am leaning on one who is strong: that though I am guilty, I have one to answer for me who is pure; that though I cannot in and of myself approach God, yet by the blood of Jesus I have boldness to come before him, yea, even into the innermost place of his presence; to lay my wants before Him; to besiege, as it were, even his very throne with prayer which He is pledged to hear. O it is a strong consolation, dear friends, to any man, to live thus, and suffer thus, and waste away thus, and die thus, with his feet on the everlasting hills, his eye fixed on the glory which is to be revealed, his hope anchored within the veil, waiting for the consolation of Israel; his flesh and his heart failing, but God the strength of his heart and his portion for ever.

But again, Christ consoles his people not only from guilt, but IN SORROW. It is his especial office, as we saw, "to bind up the broken heart; to give the oil of joy for sorrow, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." This He does directly and indirectly. Directly,

inasmuch as his Spirit is ever testifying within the sorrowing soul of the believer in him, and cheering him with better hopes and more enduring joys. Indirectly, inasmuch as his holy example is ever before us; His compassionate tone; his promises of help and comfort; his invitations to all that are weary and heavy-laden. To the Christian, the teaching of sorrow is teaching to know Christ. Others may learn what is called resignation, may apply to the benumbed sensation adages which amount to this when weighed, that they must bear what they cannot help: his is a very different and far higher lesson. A dismal road indeed is the path of worldly resignation under bereavement or anxiety: a path full of sad remembrances; ghastly with the decayed forms of vain philosophies, and sounding drearily with the confessions of past disappointment: whereas the Christian's path in sorrow is cheered by his Saviour's voice and presence, and animated by the glorious cloud of witnesses who have followed Him through suffering into triumph. The one walks alone through suffering, crushed by a sense of its immensity and inevitableness: the other walks through it with a dear and all-sufficing Friend, solaced by his converse, and assured by his promises. The one drifts without a compass helplessly before the storm: the other has an unerring compass to guide, and an almighty arm to hold the helm. No-

thing proves so much the genuineness of a man's faith in Christ, as a season of sorrow: nothing brings Christ so nearly and vividly and personally before a man. Once, he heard of Him by the hearing of the ear: but now his eye seeth him. Before, his hand seemed to be distant; employed about other men's matters; to be traced in the wide world, in a neighbour's misfortune, in a friend's bereavement: but now the lighting down of that arm is in his very home and heart; he feels its weight, and he feels its tenderness: he is prostrate under the hand which made the earth and built the heavens, but he comes to know that it would not crush one of the delicate fibres of his most susceptible feeling: he is awed at the nearness of One who is his Judge, but soothed at the close presence of One who can be touched with the feeling of his infirmities. And so Christ is the consolation of his people in sorrow: not by removing it, but by blessing it: not by causing it to be forgotten, but by making it a seed of joy, even of more knowledge of him, more hope in him, more likeness to him. And thus in sorrow also they wait for the consolation of Israel: wait for him to reveal himself more fully—wait for the harvest of this seed of joy; wait till the time when He shall bring again with him all that sorrow mourns for, yea, and abundantly more, in the hour of his appearing

But it seems to me that I ought to be drawing some special instruction out of such a subject as this, now that another year is gathered up behind us and we stand on the verge of a new period of our lives. Who is there at such a time, who wants not consolation? How can we contemplate unmoved the vast weight of account which has been added to the past? How look on to the demands, and the uncertainties, and the perils of the future, with any confidence? Either of these, soberly considered, would be a burden too great for our spirits to bear. And tell me not of that worldly experience, which as it goes on, makes a man insensible to the lapse of these periods of time; causes him to pass over the last Sunday of a year as coolly as over any ordinary day: say not to me, I have learned to despise such artificial marks and notes of time, and to pass on from one to another without feeling these things of which you speak. For I must reply, that I know of no consolation in such worldly skill. It seems to me much as if a deaf or a blind man were to claim our congratulation, for not being disturbed by the sounds or sights around him. Rather let us have our senses perfect, whatever suffering they bring. Well then, as to the account of the past year. O how could we look on it without terror, but for the consolation that is in Christ? Take its lessons of wisdom, its lessons of trial; its promptings

of experience, its teachings of sorrow. How much are we the better for them? Where are we in the school of Christ, after this renewed season of his patient forbearance, his assiduous teaching? O were He not our consoler as well as our teacher, were we not waiting for his consolation, as well as training by his doctrine, our hearts might indeed sink within us at the sight of our own unworthiness and short-coming. And for the future, how can we face the certain duties, the uncertain trials, of another year, without Him; without expecting and looking for His consolation? If thy presence go with me, then let me go on:

Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without thee I cannot live:
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without thee I dare not die.

There is one peculiar application which seems to belong to the text. Our Lord's birth was spiritually welcomed by two persons, both in the decay of life: the aged Simeon, and the aged prophetess Anna. Each sex paid the holy Child its tribute of recognition and praise, and bore its prophetic witness of hope. Each sent its deputation to greet the new-born Saviour. But there came no youths and maidens strewing flowers in His path; no joyous choruses of lusty voices pealing His praise. There came two withered and aged forms; emblems of endurance in faith, and one of them of long

acquaintance with sorrow. This seems to speak very specially to the aged in Christ's flock at such a season as this. You, my revered brethren and sisters, you of the silver hair and the enfeebled step, are God's heralds to greet the Saviour and to proclaim him to us. Your example it is to which we look, your words which we pause to hear, in this matter. Teach us by your lips and lives, how to wait for the consolation of Israel. Standing so near the heavenly country, let us see some of its glory reflected from you. Short as your waiting time is, teach us who may have longer to tarry, how such consolation ought to be yearned for. And may we all, young, and mature, and aged, have grace so to be ever waiting for and looking to Christ, that our past may be secured by his pardon, and our future safe in his keeping.

SERMON VI.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

1856-7.

GAL. iv. 4.

“God sent forth His son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

THE event in our Lord's life, which the services of this day bring before us, is connected in the collect with his being “made obedient to the law for man.” It was indeed the first introductory act of that course of perfect obedience which measured his life on earth. And it becomes an interesting point for us, employed as we at present are in treating of his Person and office, and having last spoken of his humiliation of himself in becoming incarnate in our flesh, to enquire into the nature, and the account to be given, of this his obedience to the law of his Father.

And first, it was not a matter of course, fol-

lowing upon his incarnation. Scripture every where separates the two, making his obedience an additional thing, undertaken by him over and above his becoming man. "Being found in fashion as a man, He became obedient." And here again, "made of a woman, made under the law." The meaning of such a distinction will be plainer to us, if we put the case thus: Our Lord might have lived and died, had it been consistent with his high purpose, in sinless purity, — without expressly undertaking, as he did, openly to fulfil the law. Take an instance of this latter. He came to John to be baptized. John, knowing him to be pure and holy and spotless — having from a child been aware that sin could not be laid to his charge, though he as yet knew him not as the promised Messiah, — was repelling him, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" But Jesus persisted, answering, "Suffer it to be so now;" as our relations subsist at present, Thou the administrator of the law, — I its fulfiller: "for thus it becometh us" — thee and me — thee, in administering, me in obeying, — "to fulfil all righteousness." The coming to John's baptism was thus a voluntary act, an express undertaking on the part of our Lord, which he saw to be becoming and fit, for the great work which he had in hand. I adduce it not to dwell on it, but as a sample of his whole

course of obedience, as being a thing undertaken by him of set purpose, as a part of his mission of Redemption ; a positive thing, not to be for a moment, in our thoughts, merged in the mere negative fact of his being pure and free from sin.

Secondly, it was not only an integral, but also a necessary part, of his work of Redemption. Our text alone might suffice to shew us this. He was "made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law." Had this not been so, Redemption would have been incomplete. For look at the matter thus : God had more or less revealed himself to all mankind : enough indeed to every people, to render their falling into sin without excuse. The light of the natural conscience, more or less aided by remnants of primæval truth, was the guide of the nations of the earth. But to the Jewish people a special revelation had been made. God had revealed himself as their covenant God : had brought them into nearer relation to himself, and given them as complete a manifestation of his will as they could bear. So that the Jew was lifted above all the other nations, and stood nearer to God. His privilege was greater : and his guilt was different. The guilt of all mankind before God was indeed that of original disobedience, but might now be said to consist in blindly following sinful courses : while Israel's guilt was that of the con-

stant and deliberate disregard of a written and ever-present law. The one would be known by the general name of "*sin*:" the other by the more definite name of "*transgression*;" the overstepping of a line which God's own hand had traced for them. Now had our Lord been born a Gentile, been born spotless and holy, as he was, had he lived and ministered in Rome or Athens, and fulfilled perfectly every requirement of God which was known and current among the people of whom he, according to the flesh, was one, he could not (I use the term as limiting, not what is possible with God himself, but what He has rendered possible under the conditions to which he has subjected his world) have been the Saviour of the world: for there would have still remained the Jewish people, with their higher requirements of obedience, their greater sin of direct transgression, untouched by the Lord's work in the flesh, any further than as they were parts of that human nature which he took on Him. To say nothing of the difficulties which stand in the way of the Jew hearing of and accepting a Gentile Redeemer, there would thus have been in his obedience, if not in his very propitiation itself, an inherent defect. The highest requirement made known to man must be fulfilled by him. Not only God's unwritten law in the conscience, but God's written law in the tables of stone, must be completely satisfied. And, to touch

for a moment on the other point, the lamb chosen for sacrifice was ever to be the choice of the flock. There was another important reason why our Lord should be constituted under the law, a Jew. If we read the Epistle to the Romans, we find there the Spirit of God declaring to us the reason why he dealt as he did with the Jews, in giving them a law whose requirements none of them could fulfil. By the downward course of the Gentile world it was proved that man, left comparatively to himself and the light of his own conscience, could not know nor obey God. But a further proof was needed, to prepare mankind to receive the general offer of free salvation. Man was not yet brought in guilty and without excuse. If, it might be said, God had given to us a revelation of his will, we might have obeyed him and satisfied his demands. Such an excuse God anticipated, and raised up the Jewish people, who were placed in the full light of his revealed moral purity, and yet disobeyed him even more, and more notably, than the Gentiles. Thus, it being now shewn, that neither by natural nor by revealed light was man capable of pleasing God, all men were left simply and solely dependent on his free and unmerited grace. And this grace being appointed to come by and through the incarnate Son of God; that righteousness which put man into the position of God's approval being to come in by

one man Jesus Christ ; all cases of guilt must be covered, all situations of disobedience taken up, and borne, and carried triumphantly out into perfection and accordance with the Father's will, by the Son of God in our flesh. And this could only be done, by his taking upon him the situation of the higher responsibility and the deeper guilt. The greater covered and included the less : the higher platform presupposed, and was raised on, the lower. And even yet another reason was there, why our Lord should have been made under the law. His fulfilling of the will of God for man was to be not only complete, so that he should stand in the root of our nature as the accepted man, but was to be our pattern, that as he was holy, so we might be holy also. You will see this more clearly, when you remember that fact which has so often guided us to a perception of the reasonableness of God's ways : I mean, the fact that man, reasonable and responsible as he is, cannot be acted on for good, except through his enlightened conscience and his persuaded will. No mere fulfilment of God's laws, however perfect, on the part of our Redeemer, could ever, no, not even when joined with his atonement and the gift of his Spirit, have acted as a means of introducing us into God's favour, unless it were such as would enable us to look upon it, and to be attracted to the imitation of it. Now this enabling was effected by our

Lord, partly by his death and triumph, which removed our guilt, and gained for us the Holy Spirit—but partly also by his obedience being of such a nature, as to be our perfect pattern of obedience also. And this it could not have been, had it not been of the highest kind. It could not have been, had not he been placed in the fullest light of God's revealed will: to shew us, *how* that will is to be approached, how interpreted, how undertaken and carried out. He came, as regarded this matter, not to stand beneath the law, but to stand above it; and this he could only do by fulfilling it, and carrying out its higher and more spiritual meaning, and causing God's truth and purity and holiness to shine through the outward veil of its commandments and ordinances. Thus he not only fulfilled all righteousness in his own Person, but he shewed to us his disciples a new and better way: He led us up through the law, and out of and above the law, into our obedience and spiritual freedom; so that he has satisfied and abolished the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, and has taken it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.

And this last consideration brings us to another reason again, why he should have been made under the law: a reason of a different sort from those as yet mentioned. They arose from the requirements of the office which he was to take upon him, considered in itself: this arises from

the requirements of that office as connected with the law. He was the END OF THE LAW. It all pointed to Him. Its types and ceremonies all found their fulfilment in his person and work. All sacrifice was consummated by his suffering: all sanctity of place prefigured Him, the only real temple in which God could dwell and be present with his creatures: all sanctity of time typified the rest from guilt and sin, into which He would introduce his believing people. With Him, all these for ever came to an end. And in order for them thus to come to an end, it was requisite that He himself should live and walk and testify among them. In the very place where all sacrifice was offered, in the place where God had put his name, and at the very time when the paschal lamb, the greatest and most significant of sacrifices, was slain, Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. In the courts of the temple itself did the chief priests meet together and devote Him as an offering for Israel, in order, to use their own language, "that one man should die for the people and all the people perish not." Through that street in Jerusalem was he led bearing his cross. And in the minutest particulars of his suffering, was the Scripture of the law fulfilled. By an apparently fortuitous circumstance, his body escaped the violence inflicted on those crucified with him: but the Holy Spirit informs us, that even this was in exact

accordance with the rules of that passover which he was fulfilling: for of the paschal lamb it was ordained, that a bone of him should not be broken. And at the moment also of his expiring, in the temple itself token was given that the requirements of the law were fulfilled, and its hindrances taken away. The veil which secluded the presence of God from the intrusion of the people was rent in twain from top to bottom: to signify that the law had now no more separating or hindering power, but that all men have equal access at all times to the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Where could all this have been done, but at Jerusalem and under the law? And not less striking is the way in which the fact of Christ having been made under the law, unites and clears and justifies all God's dealings with man. God gave a law which was valid through whole generations of men; a law with various sanctions and ordinances and prohibitions. That law is done away. The church of God seems to stand on other foundations; to have changed the ground of her obedience, and the warrant of her hope. But this is not so. Not a jot nor a tittle of that law has fallen away, or become void. All has been fulfilled. All looked forward to one who was to come—to one who *has* come, and in his own person has superseded that law, by exhausting its requirements: has glorified that law, by filling out, and animating

with spiritual life its waste and barren places. So that God has not changed, nor has his purpose wavered, nor are his people resting on other than their old foundation. Faithful is he that promised, who also did it.

Again, to us Christians, the fact that our Redeemer was made under the law is one full of interest in many different aspects of our life in him. It assures us against all the terrors of the law. He is our surety—his obedience has been approved. His personal promise, “Lo I come to do thy will, O God,” was endorsed on the scroll of the covenant, and he was taken and bound for its fulfilment. But lo! the tomb is opened and our surety is free. The deed is cancelled, as far as we are concerned. We keep it indeed, to look upon; to see what it was that he undertook for us; to trace him, as we run our eye over its sheets; yea, to see in the joy of our liberty that from which he hath delivered us: but we do not tremble as we read; we do not, or we should not, go there for precept or precedent, except indeed in those eternal moral verities which change not: because we are now complete in him, and we need not any more the hand-writing of ordinances, having his Spirit abiding with and guiding us.

Our Christian celebrations, of his ordaining, are full of associations of the law which He hath fulfilled. When we meet, as to-day,

round his table, it is to eat and drink, in spirit, of the one Sacrifice which was offered for us, just as in old time they who waited at the altar were partakers with the altar. When we sing hymns of praise, we do it in the very words with which the temple rung under the law—we cry, “Bind the sacrifice with cords, yea even unto the horns of the altar.” But we think not of bulls or of goats, while we speak thus: the Psalms convey to the Christian no mere outward ceremonial feeling, any more than they do a personally vindictive feeling: he has had his eyes opened, and looks on and utters them all with reference to Him, who is their continued subject, and their one point of convergence. And in reading the Old Testament history it is the same. The world seems to regard it,—judging by the instances where it dares to speak out, and in our days it has spoken out,—as a collection of legendary writings of doubtful character: sees nothing but the ordinary features of coarse selfishness and cruelty and superstition in its pages: but the Christian reads with far other eyes, and hears far other sounds as he reads: he knows that whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for his learning, that he through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope: knows, that the Lord himself commanded him to search these Scriptures, for that they are they that testify of Him: knows, that

all the imperfections, and sins, and conflicts, of those days were but tokens and evidences of the world's need of him who was to come: were but the strivings of God's Spirit with man, by which his guilt and unworthiness were demonstrated: knows, that amidst all these, that record is employed in tracking out these bright rays of light which preceded the Sun of righteousness, as they glanced and sparkled more and more unto the perfect day; and that it finds its appointed work in recording the preparations for his coming. Had He come when and as he did, but had He not been made under the law, these things would have been recorded in vain: the hopes and aspirings of the chosen people would have been frustrated, and the Old Testament would have remained a venerable and unintelligible fragment, instead of being as it now is, the most important, next to the New Testament itself, of all testimonies to the mission and office of Christ.

So that on all these accounts, the fact on which we are meditating to-day, that Christ was made under the law, is one inwoven into and necessary for the work of our Redemption, which he took upon him. Let us regard for a few moments the influence which this fact had over his course on earth: let us observe how he looked upon and put into action this his constitution under his Father's law. It is an instructive lesson for human pride, to see

how he condescended to the regulations and requirements of that ceremonial system, which was so infinitely beneath him, and the spirit of the Gospel which he came to bring us: to see him at the stated times betaking himself to Jerusalem to the various Jewish feasts: to see him, on the solemn night of his betrayal and agony, eating with his disciples that Passover which he was about for ever to fulfil: to see him, notwithstanding his freedom as a Son from contributing the sacred money for the maintenance of the temple, yet ordering it to be paid, lest offence should be given. Such examples as these are apt to be forgotten by many, who are loud enough in asserting our freedom in Christ, but have no place in their practice for his self-denying humility. Nor should we omit in such a consideration, that long unrecorded period, during which he lived subject to his parents at Nazareth. Brought up as a Jewish child, in a family which, as we see from the sacred narrative, kept strictly the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, and walked in them blameless, we may at least assume that he would ever, like the Psalmist of old, be found in the path of God's commandments: that no enjoined observance, no sacred time and act of worship was allowed by him to pass, without its due and accustomed honour. And we must not imagine that such honour was merely a constrained offering of one acting

perfectly a part which he had taken upon him: rather was it the cheerful entire service of one who really filled with all his heart and energy the place which had been, by his own and his Father's will, assigned him. And doubtless while in the course of such obedience, he did not fail to cast light on God's law and shew that he came not to destroy but to fulfil. If at the tender age of twelve years, he could so dispute in the temple with the doctors of the law, that all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and his answers, we may safely assume, that on many an occasion in that humble home at Nazareth, he held, even as a child, high discourse on the spirit and meaning of the law of God. We forget sometimes; how large a portion of his life was spent in working at a humble trade beneath that roof of Joseph. Thirty years, in the course of each of us who have lived so long, bears with it the formation of our life's habits and conclusions: carries most of our ripening and many of our matured thoughts. And though in some particulars of growth of mind he necessarily differed from us, yet in almost all he was made like to us: and it is to this long period that we must look, as regards his human character, for the growth to maturity of those deeply-rooted sympathies, of those maxims of human love, and of those exact habits of compliance with the inner spirit of the law of holiness, which from

the first his pure and holy soul would approve and practise, but which would require years of human experience for one who was perfect man, as well as the eternal Son of God, to live in, and walk in, and speak in, as we find him ever doing. When he increased in wisdom as well as in stature, it was by this continued practice of his Father's holy law—this humble subjection to its minutest provisions, and this spiritual filling out and exalting of its mere formal enactments: and when we read that he increased in favour with God as well as man, we must understand that he advanced ever more and more in the widening and deepening fulfilment of God's law, without spot and without blemish. It was during this unrecorded period, that his great work of obedience was carried forward to such a point that at the end of it the Father could say, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." This well pleasing had indeed been true of him from all eternity, as the Son of the Father's love: but it was now likewise true of him as *man*, perfected in God's ways—pure, so that the eye of him in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and who chargeth his angels with folly, beheld no spot in him, but rested with full satisfaction and delight on his offering of blameless obedience. Words which in our own case we properly shrink from, as applied to our obedience, are the strict and literal truth, as used of him. As

man, he *earned* God's favour : each revolving year of his childhood and youth and manhood, placed him in a higher and more glorious position of meritorious obedience.

But while treating of this his constitution under the law, we must not forget, in dwelling on this former period of his course on earth, that every most solemn particular of his greater subsequent ministerial and official life, was just simply a continuation of the same holy and spotless obedience. Of his Death itself it is said, "He became obedient even unto," as far as, not stopping short of, "Death." On the Cross, God's law received its highest fulfilment. The extreme penalty was paid by one who personally had never incurred that penalty. "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin." Having brought that nature of ours which he bore upon him, through perfect obedience which it could never fulfil, he then descended with it into the depth of its deserved degradation, and exhausted the whole cup of that punishment which its primæval taint had incurred. Being found in the likeness of sinful flesh, he offered himself as the sacrifice for that sin ; and thus having by obedience and by suffering, by his life and by his death, entirely fulfilled the demands of God's law, he came out of Death triumphant, and he now stands in the presence of the pure and holy One as the accepted man, the first-born of our race, the

only meritorious winner, and the perfect object and receptacle, of the love and favour of God. In him, our nature is one with God: and is one, in virtue of that his perfect human unity with God's law and God's will. And just on account of this perfect unity, does the Holy Spirit of God, the Spirit of his Son, descend down even to the lowest of his members, to the humblest and simplest of those, who in faith and will and obedience are united to him, as he is to the Father.

And these last words bring us to ourselves; to our position; to our lessons from this high and blessed topic. Our year begins with Him: with him, as made under the law. That law itself he has fulfilled and superseded. In all its ceremonial ordinances, we are dead to it. We are not made under that law. But we are made under the light and example of his holy humility and obedience. None shall live and reign with him, who do not follow him in this course of conscious, self-denying, cheerful, loving obedience, of which we have been treating. We have a new law, which he has given us; a law no longer written on tables of stone, but by his Spirit on the fleshy tables of the heart. Dear friends, remember this, now that another year stretches before us with its new hopes, new temptations, new resolves. Are you and I in earnest about this our life's work of obedience to Him? I do not mean, do we assent now in

church to what we hear respecting it? but I mean, has it a place in our thoughts and lives, as real as any of their occupations and interests? As we set before ourselves our position and work in this world as an acknowledged fact—a thing not to be neglected—a matter to be recurring to with each returning day's light, and followed out with all our energy, so ought we in and throughout and ever in this our worldly occupation to set before ourselves our standing and work in Christ as a real daily living thing, demanding our wisdom and our energy; requiring advance from year to year, wanting to be better understood by us, more closely followed, more deepened and brightened, and lived into continually. Is this so with us? Is the light of our Christian example not only lighted and shining but ever shining more and more; held higher, and better trimmed, as the Bridegroom draws nearer? What words are those of his—"Father, I glorified thee on earth, I finished the work which thou gavest me to do." O brethren, glorify Him, every one of you: be thus getting on with the work which he has given you to do. Each one of these years, of which we make so light, whose passing away we merely note by a turn of our pen, is an element in our eternal being, a gain or a loss for ever, according as it has been spent for Christ's work, or for ourselves and the world.

His atonement, his triumph, the gift of his Spirit,—these have put it in the power of every one that believes in him, to please God and to fulfil his will. We may walk as He walked; not indeed in the perfect and unsinning observance of every command of our Father, but in entireness of heart and consistency of holy conduct gradually but surely aiming after and coming towards his example, and changed into his image.

And let this holy Sacrament, which binds us in such a blessed manner to Him and to one another, be to us to-day a solemn opportunity of renewing our covenant with him for this year and for our lives. Let us to-day again resolve that we will not live for ourselves, nor for the world, nor for the semblance of religion, nor for religious party, but for Him; for Him, though conflict and struggle within be daily needful; for Him, though the world scoff at us, though the Church look slightly on us: for him who loved us and bought us with his blood, though all were against us. But blessed be his name, it is not so. Much, it is true, hinders us, within and without: but we have his word, we have his promises, we have the witness of his Spirit. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Passing years bring us nearer to Him. The world's voice becomes fainter, but his, louder and sweeter., Let us

then thank God and take courage: and go forth to-day from his table with our loins girt and our staves in our hand—ready for this fresh stage of our journey—ready to do or to suffer, to live or to die, as shall be his will regarding us.

SERMON VII.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

1857.

1 TIM. iv. 10.

“ We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.”

THE present ecclesiastical season is named from the Epiphany, or manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. Now this manifestation, made as it had been in foretaste specially to the wise men from the East, and announced as it had been from of old by prophecy, when it really came, took the whole Church by surprise. The Apostles knew that He was to be the light to lighten the Gentiles: but they ever thought that this bright lamp would be kindled on Mount Zion, and the nations would flock to its shining. They had no idea that each Gentile people, and each Gentile man, would have it for his own, irrespective of any connexion with, or present derivation through the chosen peo-

ple. And they were very slow indeed in coming to the apprehension of this great truth. It was alien altogether from their habits of thought, to imagine a Gentile, as such, admitted into God's church, and placed on an equality with the Jew. The feeling was far deeper rooted among them, as well as far better grounded, than the similar feeling against equality with the coloured races is at this day. And St. Paul, the only one among them who from the first entered into and carried out this great design of God, speaks of it in these remarkable terms: "By revelation he made known unto me the mystery, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise by Christ in the Gospel." Now *we* are so accustomed to the assertion of and practical acting on this truth, that we can with difficulty put ourselves in the position of those who for the first time called a Gentile a brother in Christ; who saw that barrier broken down by God's own hand, which God's own hand had been for ages building up. Yet we are able, I think, to estimate, even by our very habituation to it, the importance of the question which was then at stake. We see, that if the Gentile was to be compelled to live as did the Jew, there would in fact be an end

to the doctrine, in its freeness and fulness, that Christ was the Saviour of the world : that he would be the Saviour of one people, and of the world through them : and that in the promise, “ In thy seed shall all families of the earth be blessed ”—we should have to take the word “ seed ” not of One, viz. Christ, as now, but of that nation which proceeded forth from Abraham. Besides which, the very foundations of the Gospel would thus be overthrown with regard to man’s salvation thereby. If any thing,—a nation, or a church, or a ministry, or an ordinance,—is to be put between man’s soul and its access to Christ, the Gospel is thereby annulled and made void. All these may lead to Christ : but they must not stand in the way to Christ. “ The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH : ” and none may interfere with the privilege of the individual soul to receive, independently of any external mediator, the voice of God’s Spirit testifying of Christ. Now all this was revealed to St. Paul ; and we need not therefore wonder at the determined stand which he made against all who would set up in any form the present superiority of the Jew, or the obligation of the Gentile to become like the Jew. Such thoughts as these occur to us as we reflect on the subject of the season : and I make use of them to-day to introduce the important truth declared in our text, which lay at the foundation of the

whole matter then in question. We should but very insufficiently set forth to you the Son of God as the Redeemer of man, if we did not also set forth the universality of the Redemption wrought by him. And we should be giving very wrong ideas of that universality, did we not also shew, in what cases the Redemption wrought for all becomes effectual in man's personal salvation. Both these points are brought before us in my text: "He is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe." And on the two we will, if you please, spend our time and thoughts this morning, in dependence on the teaching of God's Spirit.

Whether then we take the words "the living God" in our text to apply to Christ himself, or to the Father acting by Christ, it is equally asserted that Christ is the Saviour of all men: that the salvation which he wrought is, in and of itself, coextensive with the race of man. What He did, he did for, or in the stead of, all men. If we wish to corroborate this by further Scripture proof, we have it in abundance. I will take but three of the plainest passages. St. John in his first Epistle, ii. 1, 2, writes, "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." St. Paul, 2 Cor. v. 14, says, "the love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus

judge that if one died for all, then all died: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." In Rom. v. 10 he goes further into the same truth, where he says, "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." And the exposition of this truth reaches its clearest and fullest point, when he says, as in 1 Cor. xv. 22, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." I say, it is at its clearest and fullest, because by these words the Apostle handles the very key of the mystery of the universality of Christ's redemption: as again where he says, "The first man was of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." Let us enter on this point more at length, for it is of fundamental importance. Adam, when he came fresh from the hands of God, was the head and root of mankind. He was mankind. She who was to be an helpmeet for him, was not created a separate being, but was taken out of him. The words spoken of him apply to the whole human race. The responsibility of the whole race rested upon him. When he became disobedient, all fell. "By one man's disobedience all were made sinners:" and the consequence was, a coming upon all men of the sentence of

death. Figure to yourselves—and it is very easy to do so, from the many analogies which nature furnishes,—this constitution of all mankind in Adam: for it is the very best of all exponents of the nature of Christ's standing in our flesh, and Christ's work in our flesh: with this great difference indeed, inherent in the very nature of the case, that the one work in its process and result is purely physical, the other spiritual as well. Adam having fallen, the head being dishonoured, the root being tainted, the whole race, derived or to be derived from Adam, the members of that head, the branches from that root, fell with him; became unclean and tainted. The race, in its natural constitution in Adam, i. e. as each member of it is born into the world and lives in the world naturally, is alien from and guilty before God: has lost the power of pleasing God: cannot work out its own salvation in or by any one of its members; all being involved in the same universal ruin. "In Adam all die." The penalty of this deflection of the whole race, viz. death, abides on us all: death physical, absolutely on all, owing to the physical deterioration of our bodies by reason of sin, which has made them mortal in our present sense of the word: and death eternal, in our mature and final state hereafter, unless some remedy be devised, which shall set before us a rescue, as deep and as wide as the ruin was, from this most awful consequence of

our fall. Now that rescue must not, cannot in God's arrangements, come from without. It must come upon mankind from within. God's law respecting us is, that all amendment, all purifying, all renewal, should spring from among, and take into itself and penetrate by its influence, the inner faculties and powers wherewith He has endowed our nature. We read that God smiles, and the face of the earth is renewed. Inanimate nature withers or buds forth at her Creator's word. But when He built up the wonderful fabrics of organized life, he at the same time introduced a law which, though he may occasionally interrupt it, yet regulates all organic change; viz. that it should be brought about in and by the ordinary faculties and unfoldings of each tribe and each individual. And when we rise yet higher, and superadd to organized life, as in our own case, all the far more wonderful powers and faculties of spiritual being; when we think of a race endowed with reason and memory, and guided in its affections and desires by a responsible conscience, then we may, in our inference, rise higher also, and say that no redemption would be effectual for man, which did not plant itself in and unfold itself from the very centre and root of his nature: that as by man came death, by man also must come the resurrection of the dead: that as by man, misguided in his judgment, led astray in his affections, misusing his

desires, came the fall, so also by man, establishing a perfect obedience before God, must come the recovery, the reunion with God: the re-establishment of the possibility of man being dwelt in by the Spirit of God, and being the son of God and heir of God's glory. And when I say all this must come by man, I do not for a moment mean, by any individual man among the sons of men. For in the first place, this could not be. All were tainted; morally tainted by descent from Adam. So that none could bring in righteousness; none could plant in humanity a seed different from that which was already planted. Nor, even could any of us have done this, would the effect have extended beyond our own individual selves. You are not, I am not, no one is, head of mankind. Of what use would it be, that you, that I, that any one, should perfectly obey God, should die an unjust and cruel death, should rise again from the dead, should be received up into heaven? I am supposing of course an impossibility; but it is for the sake of combating doctrinal error, and setting the universality of Christ's redemption clearly before you. Now let us carry our hypothesis a step further. We know that our redemption was effected by the eternal Son of God becoming incarnate in our flesh. Now suppose for a moment that He, the Son of God, had become an individual personal man, bounded by his own responsibilities, his own capacities,

his own past, and present, and future. The supposition is equally impossible with the other: but it may for an instant be made, for the purpose of clearing up a great and often misapprehended truth. If he had thus become a personal man, not one of his acts would have had any more reference to you or me than the acts of Abraham, or David, or St. Paul, or St. Peter, have. He might have set us an example ever so bright; might have undergone sufferings ever so bitter; might have won a triumph ever so glorious; and we should merely have stood and looked on from without. No redemption, no renovation of our nature could by any possibility have been made. And yet I do believe that, in this nineteenth century of the Christian Church, with all the history of the doctrine of Christ's person before us, and in this land of light and of bibles, and in this congregation of Christians, there are many whose ideas of Christ are just this that I have been mentioning; that He became '*a man*;' one individual man personally; and as such individual man, did, for and instead of you and me, obey God, and suffer for sin, and overcome death, and sits at God's right hand. Now let us look at the truth of the matter. Christ took upon him, took into the Godhead which he never laid aside, the nature of man. He, the divine personal Son of God, came and dwelt in our flesh. He did not lay aside his personality as

Son of God. The very thought is absurd : for then he would have ceased to be the same person. He did not unite the divine person with a human person, for then he would have become two distinct persons, which is equally repugnant to the necessities of truth, of being, and action. He was, in the flesh, the personal Son of God, and that alone. But he dwelt, tabernacled, in our nature. He took it unto, and bore it upon him in all its entirety. He took it free indeed from that taint which it had contracted by means of the first Adam's sin, for with that the pure and holy Son of God could not enter into union, and this was but its accident, not its essence : but he took it with all the physical consequences of that taint upon it—which were only misery and not sin,—with infirmity, pain, sorrow, and death. And He, thus being the divine Son of God, and having become the Son of man, was no longer an individual man, bounded by the narrow lines and limits of his own personality, but was and is God manifest in the flesh ; a sound and righteous head of our whole nature, just as Adam was its first and sinful head. Hence it is, that whatever he does, has so large a significance. Hence, that when he fulfils the law, his righteousness is accepted as ours. Hence, that when he died, he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, and offered, by his own sacrifice, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation,

and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world. Hence, and hence only it is, that it can be said in the words of Scripture which we have quoted already to-day, "As by the disobedience of one judgment came upon all men unto condemnation:" viz. because all men were shut up and included in that one, Adam: "so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life:" viz. because in this case also, all men were shut up and included in that one, Christ. So that when we speak, and rightly speak, of Christ's vicarious sacrifice, we do not mean that one single man, divine and innocent, offered himself for and instead of all other individual men, so that his merits are large enough for all who choose to avail themselves of them: we do not conceive that Scripture speaks of mere possibilities and provision made, when it says "in Christ shall all be made alive;" but we mean by Christ's vicarious sacrifice, that the happy and holy Son of God did, of his infinite love to a lost race, take upon him, into union with his divine nature, and did clothe his personal Godhead with, that nature itself which was thus lost and ruined, and did undergo the penalty of its sin—of all its sin—and did bring it up entire out of death and the grave; and we mean by "in Christ shall all be made alive," that from this vicarious work and sacrifice of the Redeemer, consequences not only possible, but actual, flow forth to every member

of our common race, in virtue of that common membership, in virtue of their physical union with Christ in their common humanity. Whether those consequences will be to them an advantage or a disadvantage, a gain or a loss, must, from the very constitution of our nature, both physical and spiritual, depend on further considerations, involving the exercise of their own spiritual faculties and capacities. "Christ is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."

And into that part of our subject let us now enter: premising however just one retrospective and at the same time prospective remark, on the universality of the redemption of which we have been speaking. Christ is Man. Manhood finds in Him its centre, its root, its head. And manhood is one. We have all one common nature. Therefore, Christ is for all: and to deny this in practice, to retain in Christianity pre-eminence of race or nation, was, as St. Paul very well saw, to deny the truth of Christ's incarnation, and to make his salvation of none effect. He did nothing, if he did not the whole. He redeemed none, if he redeemed not all. If there existed on earth one son or daughter of Adam not redeemed by Christ, then He, who had taken it upon him to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, had not accomplished his work, and had died in vain. And let us see what this

universality of redemption implies, as regards the sons of men themselves. It enables the preacher of good tidings to come to every son and daughter of Adam, every outcast and degraded one of our race, and at once to lay before them Christ as theirs, if they will believe on him. It is the key, and the only key, to the fact of justification by faith. "Believe, and thou shalt be saved." Why? Believe in a man who died and rose again, and thou shalt be saved? By what law, by what capacity of our being; could any such effect be possible? What decree of the Almighty was ever made so completely setting at nought all his eternal arrangements? No, brethren, it is not so: but it is just because Christ's redemption is a fact wide as man's nature, because He, when he suffered, rescued not himself, but you and me and every man, and because faith is just simply the uniting our spiritual being, which leads and governs the man, to this fact, is but simply asserting our claim in Christ, taking up our freedom which he hath bought for us, becoming united to that righteousness which He, our second head, has wrought out for us, striking, with the daily voice of our thoughts and lives, into harmony with this ground tone of the life of God.

Now this at once brings us to the second part of our text. In the broad sense on which we have hitherto been insisting, Christ is the Saviour of all men; of the whole of mankind.

All have an equal part and right in Christ. And on this foundation fact, the whole mission work of the Gospel is founded. We are to go into all the world, and we are to proclaim the glad tidings to every creature. What glad tidings? Even the old good news; that unto them is born, for them has died, for them pleads in heaven, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And then, when this good news has been proclaimed to them, and when it has been proclaimed to you, comes in the all-important distinction which these words bring out; "specially of those that believe." That redemption by Christ, which is as wide as the earth, as free as the air, as universal as humanity, is no mere physical amendment which has passed on our whole race unconsciously: but it is a glorious provision for spiritual amendment, able to take up and to bless and to change and to renovate man's spiritual part, his highest thoughts, his noblest aspirings, his best affections. And these are not taken up, are not blest, are not renovated, except by the power of persuasion, and the bending of the human will, and the soft promptings of love, and the living drawings of desire. Where, as in the case of the infant, these cannot be, or can act but feebly, we believe in the potency of the Redeemer, as we believe in His will, to save even without the consciousness of the saved. The bud which

dropped unopened, shall not be charged with want of fragrance, or with having brought no fruit to perfection. But wherever there is consciousness, wherever the ear can hear the message, the heart can take it in, the will can turn the helm of life, there man must consciously, willingly, earnestly, accept and appropriately Christ's work, and be put into living spiritual union with Him, partaking of that Spirit which he won for all who believe in him,—and thus becomes one with him in Spirit. And here is the mystery, and here is at the same time the simplicity, of justification by faith in Jesus. The mystery—for that gulf between man and God which no device of man and no merit of created being could ever pass over, is now by the accomplished work of Christ for ever filled up: and the simplicity—for the path is so plain and so safe that the untaught, the infirm and the simple can pass over it without fear. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He is the Saviour of all men, in that he included them all in that nature which he took on him, and bore the whole world's sin, and opened a way for all to God:—he is specially the Saviour of them that believe, in that in their case only does this his salvation become actual and come to its ripeness and perfection; in them only does his Spirit dwell: they only are changed into his

image: they only shall be with him and behold his glory where he is and be perfectly like him, seeing him *as* he is.

And now, dear friends, let us not hesitate to press this subject closely home to ourselves. We are every one of us redeemed by Christ. Not one was left out of his thoughts, when he undertook to be the Saviour of the world. His salvation belongs to us all. We all have, by virtue of what he has done, a claim, yea even a right to a part in him. Blessed condition, and lofty privilege: to be able to look up where He is, glorious in his triumph, faintly discerned in the brightness of the eternal throne, and to say, This glorified One is MINE; my Head, my Advocate, my representative before God; in one word, my Saviour. And that every one here may do; one as well as another; the oldest and the youngest, the wisest and the simplest. All may do it: but now comes the question of questions for every one: ARE YOU DOING IT? Dost thou believe in the Son of God? O let there be no self-deceit here. If thou dost, then is this belief no mere super-added fact to thy life and thoughts, like a new planet or a new discovery of science, leaving thee where thou wert and as thou wert, with one idea more: if thou dost, it is not as one belief among thy many beliefs, Christ believed in as Cæsar is believed in; if thou dost, it is not as the chief of a group of thy thoughts,

recurring and working when its time comes round, subduing an hour or a day to its constraint, preoccupying thee at stated seasons only: if thou dost, it is not as a coal glowing at thine heart whose warmth thy neighbour never felt, a lamp kindled within thee which the world without never saw: O no: if thou art among those that believe, one of those that have this great God manifest in the flesh for their special and actual Saviour,—He is thy central fact; thy one discovery of life; a present living power to thee; chief of all thy thoughts, constraining and subduing the rest every day and all day long; not preoccupying thee indeed, but while it possesses, enlarging and warming and quickening thee for all other things that are true and honest and just and pure and lovely and of good report: yea, if thou believest on Christ unto salvation, He will be in thee a light shining before men; thou wilt be in thy place and degree a pattern to others, as He is a pattern to thee. And if, while I speak, some are saying, that this is a picture of impossible perfection, I answer, with words not mine own, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his:” I answer, that whatever you may profess and observe, whatever preachers you may hear, and sects you may join, there is but one test of believing in Christ, and that is, the fruits of faith; a holy and Christ-like walk and conversation. Faith without works is dead:

yea is not faith at all. O may every one who has heard me to-day be able, in the midst of all self-abasement and unworthiness, to say with the great Apostle, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

SERMON VIII.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

1857.

JOHN iv. 25.

“The woman saith unto Him, I know that Messiah cometh which is called Christ: when He is come, He will teach us all things.”

THE threefold office of Christ, as Prophet, Priest, and King, was very early recognized in his Church. We find in the ecclesiastical history of Eusebius, written at the beginning of the fourth century, our Lord called “the only High Priest of the universe, and the only King of all creation, and the only Chief-prophet of prophets.” And from that time to this, especially since the great theologians of the Reformation, such division of his office has been usually made. And indeed it was sufficiently obvious to do so, to those who studied the descriptions of him in God’s word. His peculiar official name is the CHRIST: the Anointed of God. This idea at once brings before us the

threefold office. As Elisha was anointed by Elijah to be a prophet of God, so was the future Servant of the Lord to be anointed by the Spirit to preach glad tidings to the weak: as the Kings of Israel were anointed, so was Christ to be anointed to be King of righteousness: as the law ordained that the High Priest should be anointed to his office, so is Christ also made an High Priest, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. So that the very idea of Christ, the anointed One, naturally presents itself to us in this threefold aspect.

We will, in the progress of our treatment of the Person and Office of our Lord, now take these terms in order, and endeavour by God's help to lay them forth before you. They are all, you will observe, terms used relatively to *us*. He is *our* Prophet, *our* Priest, *our* King. And though in some senses these offices may seem to extend wider than over our nature, yet it is by and because of his relation to us that such further extent exists. He took on him, in order to the becoming each of these, our human nature, not that of angels or other rational existences.

In dealing with this his threefold office, we will to-day choose that one of the three which is usually placed first, as the inferior, and leading up to the others: and we will speak of Jesus as our *Prophet*. And first of the sense

in which we use the word *prophet*, when we so call him. As now generally understood, it imports one who by divine inspiration declares things to come. But such is not the original nor the necessary import of the word. Rather is it a speaker forth, an utterer to others of a message, or a doctrine, which he himself has received in commission. This is exactly the meaning which we find attached to the word in the writings of the Greeks themselves; and this is the meaning which best suits it when used of our Lord, as will appear plainly on entering into the Scripture testimony on the subject. The first and plainest promise of Christ as the Prophet, is the well-known one at Deut. xviii. 15—19 :—“ The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; according to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words into his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my

name, I will require it of him." And indeed after so direct a declaration we hardly need search further, except in illustration of this character so set forth. But let us first see what is here implied. This prophet was to be *like unto Moses*. Now certainly the principal act of Moses as a prophet was not to prophesy, as we now understand that word. He did indeed in the latter part of his teaching, announce to Israel the punishments which should follow on their disobedience to the law of their God, and utter some prophecies, which have been very signally and solemnly fulfilled: but by far the greater part of his prophetic work consisted in declaring the will of God, and delivering forth to Israel the law which God delivered to Him. And so much was this the case, that in our present sense of the word it seems strange to us to speak of the prophet Moses: and we rather receive him as the lawgiver, the teacher of God's people Israel. And just such another prophet was the promised Messiah to be. "I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." From this great promise we may trace the expectation so prevalent among the Jewish people, of a Prophet to arise and teach them. It is true that they did not always identify this prophet with the Messiah. When John the Baptist came preaching and baptizing in the wilderness of Judæa, and the authorities at

Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him "Who art thou?", when he had denied that he was the Christ, and that he was Elijah, they asked him "Art thou the prophet?" and he answered "No." And again they said "Why baptizest thou then, if thou art not the Christ, nor Elijah, neither the prophet?" Still this distinction does not seem always to have been kept up. More than once, when our Lord's miracles had excited public attention, the people expressed their belief that the great Prophet was come. And in our text, the Samaritan woman, representing the notion prevalent among her countrymen, says, "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will teach us all things." It is true that the Samaritans, in receiving only the books of the law, were deprived of the great mass of prophetic testimony to our Lord: but at the same time it is equally true that they were unentangled by the later Jewish traditions; and thus their testimony is valuable, especially when so directly coincident with that of the law itself.

I will not now dwell further on Old Testament prophecy in this matter, because I hope to devote a special portion of our course to considering the prophecies concerning Christ; but I will proceed at once to the New Testament descriptions of Him in this his prophetic character. We find it constantly predicated of

him, and we find himself as constantly professing it. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him:" this declaration of God being the very work of the prophetic office. Again, "God who spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son:" made him the utterer or speaker forth to us of his will. Again, where St. Paul sums up, in 1 Cor. i. 30, those things which Christ is made to us by the Father, he places the first among them *wisdom*: "Who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:" as he had also said in ver. 24, "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." But perhaps the most remarkable passage as testifying to Christ's prophetic office, is found in Heb. ii. 11—13. The argument there is tending to prove the identity of nature between Christ and His people. "It became him of whom are all things and by whom are all things (*viz.* the Father), in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation (*viz.* Christ) perfect through sufferings. For he that sanctifieth (*viz.* Christ) and they that are sanctified (*viz.* his people) are all of one (*viz.* God: his sons, all of them): for which cause he (*viz.* Christ) is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the

church will I sing praise unto thee." And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me." Now the notability of this passage consists in this, that it takes the words of David, from whom the first quotation comes, and of Isaiah, from whom the two latter quotations come, and at once without explanation or apology puts them into the mouth of Christ as spoken regarding himself. And why so? Just for this reason :—because all words spoken by the prophets concerning themselves, as acting in their prophetic office, belong to and find their fulness in him who was the great Prophet, even Christ.

But let us now regard a few of his own sayings on this subject. We find these, where we might expect them, in the greatest number, in the Gospel of St. John, in which he speaks most of his own person and office. There, in conflict with the Jews, it is his constant purpose to set forth himself as the doer and speaker of the Father's will, as his missionary or prophet, to manifest forth his good pleasure. The very point of his contention with them was this, that he came to do and speak the will of his Father, who they said was their God. Therefore, had they loved God they must have loved him : had they been minded to do the Father's will they would have known respecting his teaching, whether it were of God or no.

In the opening speech of his contest with them, he declares, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for whatsoever things he doeth, these also doeth the Son in like manner." And in the final close of his testimony to them, formally summed up by the Evangelist at the end of ch. xii., he said, "I have not spoken of myself: for the Father which sent me, he gave me commandment, what I should say and what I should speak." Nor is it only in conflict with his enemies that he declares this. He is equally desirous that his own disciples, whom he loved, and that we who believe on him through their word, should have clear sight of the same truth respecting him. In his great farewell discourse to them, the following sayings occur: "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do."

Christ then came in one portion of this his threefold office, to be a teacher and a speaker forth to us of the will of God. As on the one hand, those are deeply in error who limit his office to this portion of it, and omit to dwell on his High-priesthood and his Kingship, so on the other hand it would be an error equally fatal to the entering into and realizing his re-

demption, to forget in those other essentials of his office, this his great work of teaching. Let us now therefore, and for the rest of our time this morning, contemplate him as our Prophet—our teacher sent from God: enquiring into his practice, and the peculiar characteristics of that his teaching.

First then, his teaching was *earnest* and *continuous*. The power of his anointing ever abode upon him, ever wrought in him, and spoke forth from him. “He taught them there,” is the constant record of the Evangelists. “He taught them, as he was wont:” “On the Sabbath days he went as was his custom into the synagogue and taught.” The Lord wrought at his appointed work while it was day with him, and he filled the day with his work. It was no accident of his course, but its very purpose and substance.

Secondly, it was a *powerful* teaching. They were astonished at his doctrine; but he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes. No man could withstand the power and wisdom with which he spake. The scoffer came to mock, and was bound in attention by the words of deep wisdom which went to his very inmost soul: the officers came to take him, and stood and listened in spite of themselves, and returned saying, “Never man spake like this man.” The disciples walked with him to Emmaus, as strangers with a

stranger: but upon recollecting their discourse by the way, they said, "Did not our heart burn within us?" The woman of Samaria, light, and trifling, and contented before with her sinful course, is pierced through by one word of his divine knowledge, and repeats to her companions, "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did."

Thirdly, it was a *spiritual* teaching: a teaching not bound down to the exposition of the law or prophets as they stood, but designed to fill them out; to clothe their dead and bare forms with life and sinews, and to establish them, where they never were planted before, in the hearts and lives of men. Take, as a witness of this, his first great discourse, the Sermon on the Mount. There, he quotes and enforces one by one the commandments of the old law: he does not put them aside, he does not set up a teaching of his own in opposition to them, but he glorifies and spiritualizes and expands each one of them. The guilt of murder is no longer confined to outward act, but is brought on a man by the angry word, or even the malicious thought: that of uncleanness is pronounced to be incurred by the lustful eye: the force of the strong asseveration binding the man to truth, is spread over the yea and nay of common life, and more than these is forbidden: the retaliation of evil is replaced by universal rendering of good:

love to our neighbour is widened to extend even to our enemies, those who hate and persecute and despitefully use us. So spiritual, so expansive, was the teaching of our great Prophet who came to expound to us the perfect will of God.

Again, his teaching was *popular* teaching. We are told that the common people heard him gladly. He did not enter on matters of high dispute which were above the possibility of interesting and attracting his hearers, but spoke to them of the common concerns of daily life, and drew his instructions from examples with which they all were familiar. And to this end no form of teaching could be more conducive, than that of the parable, which he chose on so many occasions. The parable expressed by simple and familiar similitudes, the analogies between things earthly and things heavenly. It possessed unlimited power of instruction, according as were the different perceptions of the hearers. All listened; and all received, in the measure in which they were capable of receiving. And so those his parables abide to this day. Not a child, but loves to hear them: not a theologian, but confesses their depth inexhaustible. He feared not (and therein, as in all, is he a pattern to those who are set to teach) to found his instructions on the current events and conditions of life of the day: the fall of a tower in Siloam furnishes him with occasion for explanation of God's

mysterious providential dealings, and solemn warning to those who escape his afflicting hand: the image and superscription on the current coin is the instrument whereby while wonderfully rescuing himself from the conspiracy of his enemies, he inculcates on his hearers loyal obedience to the powers set over them. All his practical precepts, all his moral and spiritual conclusions, are plain, well defined, unmistakeable even by the lowest of his hearers. There is with him no concealing unwelcome truths: no compromise with popular fallacies: none of that crafty and diplomatic arrangement of solemn things, which sends all away as they came, but giving themselves the credit for many good thoughts and much creditable zeal: No, his teaching went straight to the heart and laid open the life. Hence it was that it moved and convinced the hearers. The multitude listened to, and flocked to hear, one who was above all double purposes, who did not fence his words by prudential selfishness, but loved the truth and spoke the truth, and truckled to no man, but held each one of them as precious as the highest among them.

And this consideration leads us to another feature of his teaching: it was *bold* and *unflinching*. In what burning words, with what vehemence, and in what publicity, does he unmask the decent sanctity of the Scribes and Pharisees, who were even then conspired to kill him! What a won-

derful chapter is that 23rd of St. Matthew, when we reflect of whom and to whom he was speaking—when we recollect that he knew all things that should come upon him—that he knew that for every word of fervent rebuke, he was adding bitterness to his final cup of anguish—that he was awakening louder the cry, “Crucify him; crucify him!” and making keener the taunts beneath the cross!

Yet, notwithstanding the firmness and boldness of his teaching, it is ever gentle, mild and beneficent. He did not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax.

Again, how wonderful the whole of that section of St. Luke’s Gospel, from the 14th chapter onward, in which he defends his teaching against the same Scribes and Pharisees: vindicating his course of seeking and saving that which was lost; bringing out his gracious purposes towards sinners as contrasted with their pride, their selfishness, their unmercifulness. And if we pass on to the Gospel of St. John, what a marvellous history is that, of his great conflict with his own people who received him not: beginning from his first Sabbath miracle in ch. v.; continuing onward through various misunderstandings, persecutions, disputes, even till their hatred, and his glory, both reached their height. Every where do we find the same holy boldness, the same solemn denunciations of sin, the same utter fearlessness

of consequence, the same assertions of the simple and pure truth of God.

He never repelled an enquirer, never sent away the humble seeker unanswered. His discourses are full of tender consideration—full of acknowledgments and allowances of love. “Take heed that ye offend not one of these little ones.” “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.” “Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.”

His teaching again is full of the most varied and profound *wisdom*. All nature, and all the depths of the heart of man, lie open to him. The conditions and process of the unfolding of the seed, the secrets, and the elements of the hidden life of the tree, the influences which modify and turn about our human affections and hopes and fears, these all alike lie in his hand as instruments of his teaching, and are combined by him in the most wonderful way with the deep verities of spiritual existence—touching and clearing up the mysteries of the land which none hath seen by means of that which we all see and know.

And his teaching is also *supernatural*—above the power and grasp, as it is also above the character, of all human teachers. *We* speak from our experience: and where ability is present, and memory fails not, a human teacher will be deep in his subject and exhaustive of it, in pro-

portion to the amount of his experience of that on which he treats. But how different is this with the Lord in his teaching! Every one feels in a moment, that the element of experience never enters into consideration here. He comes from a superior place, and he tells us things which man could never know. No amount of experience can rise above those matters, with which experience is concerned. No amount of experience could ever tell us that the kingdom of heaven is at hand: none, that the pure in heart shall see God: none, that the angels of the little children do always behold the face of our Father in heaven: none, that there is joy in the presence of the angels of heaven over one sinner that repenteth.

And advancing onward, we may say again that his teaching is, strictly speaking, *prophetic*. It forewarns and foretells, as well as instructs and guides. And all this, as no human prophet has ever done. "Whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments, and teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of God." "Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And I will say unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye workers of iniquity." Such sayings scattered up and down among the Lord's discourses, would, even without his longer and

more direct prophecies, invest them with a character, as regards the future, belonging to no human teaching. He who speaks, has the future stretched before his eye. He speaks of it, not as the word of the Lord came unto him here or there, as did the prophets, but out of the fulness of that Spirit which was given to him without measure. And it is the same when he reveals to us the things concerning the progress of the faith and the fortunes of his church. Grave as may be the thoughts of the Christian when he looks abroad over the world, so little leavened with God's truth, so full, when that truth is known, of hypocrisy, selfishness, double purpose; when he sees the church herself hardly distinguishable from the world except by the employment of holier weapons for the same selfish purposes,—bitter as may be his disappointment at all this,—can he say that there is any part of it of which our great Prophet did not forewarn us? It was he who told us that “he came not to send peace on earth but a sword:” he who told us of “the strait gate and narrow way that leadeth to life and the few that go in thereat:” he that described to us the various classes of hearers who should receive the word of life, the three unprofitable, to the one yielding a return: he again that, representing the people of God by ten virgins who had taken their lamps and gone forth to meet the bridegroom, told us,

besides the distinction between the five wise and the five foolish, that while the bridegroom tarried, they *all* slumbered and slept: he, that forewarned us that, as the time of the end draws on, iniquity shall abound, and the love of many wax cold.

Another remarkable characteristic of our Lord's teaching remains to be considered. Sent as he was from God to reconcile us to him, to be the atonement for our sins and the receiver of us in righteousness, yet in his teaching, he does not bear witness of himself. He ever speaks of the Father—his will—his work—his being glorified. He magnified not himself. He left his own mighty power and his own inconceivable love to find their testimony in his deeds. And these deeds, after all, found not a less important part of his teaching than his words. He went about doing good—and every beneficent act that he did had besides its present purpose a deep spiritual significance for all ages of his church. We as we read, learn as much from his miracles as from his parables. When he turned the water into wine, when he touched and made clean the leper, when he changed the raving demoniac into one sitting at his feet clothed and in his right mind, when he multiplied the sustenance for the five and the four thousand, when he proved himself the resurrection and the life at the grave of Lazarus,—we feel as we read that

all the time, and almost by every act and word and look, he is teaching us—unfolding to us ourselves, and himself, in a wonderful and gracious manner: we are persuaded as we know more of the holy Gospels, that that life of his on our earth, in word and in deed, in action and in suffering—in its opening and its process and its end and its glorification, was all a declaration of God—a divine reality yet living and yet speaking among us. Go where we will, his voice yet sounds about us: the world with its din cannot silence it, even our own treacherousness does not escape from it: other sounds may fill the ear as they pass, but the tender and abiding echoes are words that He uttered: friends may greet us and may gladden us, but his greeting is ever the sweetest, his loving words ever the dearest: foes may deride and give us pain, but if we can hear Him and feel him close to us with his soft pleadings of comfort, all is well. Oh, brethren, there is no teaching like his! How do we feel this, as knowledge is ventilated and books are multiplied: how surely do we feel, that no intelligence of man, no reasoning of them that speak on earth, can ever attain the power of one of those simple sayings direct from the heart of God, which were uttered by him that spake from heaven. There will be to us all an hour, when books shall fail to speak, and human wisdom shall have for us no more counsel: O then,

to them that believe in Him, then it is that his words are unutterably precious: then, that they are studied in the watches of the sleepless night, and gather light and meaning from hour to hour, and refresh and comfort and uphold the fainting soul: then, that his words deepen and brighten the thought of him, even till the moment when the thought of him is exchanged for the sight of him, and the sight of him transforms into his perfect image and the everlasting sharing of his glory.

O brethren, may this Prophet of our God be made to you and me wisdom from above: may his teaching be ever our guide in life: thus, hearing his sayings and doing them, may we be built on him as on a rock, and taught by him, in his word and by his Spirit, all things for time and for eternity.

SERMON IX.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

1857.

HEB. iii. 1.

“ Consider the . . . High Priest of our profession, Christ
Jesus.”

WE had occasion to speak last Sunday of the prophetic office of Christ. We come to-day to treat of his High-priesthood. And in doing so, it will be necessary to premise a few observations respecting the idea and office of a priest in general. First then it may be well to remove one source of confusion in this important matter. The office of priest as I speak of it to-day, as appointed under the old law and finding its fulfilment once and for ever in Christ, has absolutely nothing to do with our office of priest now. Since Christ's death there never has been a priest in the proper sense of the word, as will more clearly appear in the course of what we have to say. When we speak of priests in the

Church of England, we mean simply presbyters: the word itself being only a shorter form of presbyter. And when we use the same term to designate the sacerdotal office under the law, we do in fact introduce a confusion, the consequences of which are more important than might at first sight appear: for we cloud the verity of the priesthood of Christ, and lead men to forget the final end which his death put to all priesthood properly so called. Still, as the word is fixed in popular usage and sanctioned also by the directions in our liturgy, it would be merely increasing the confusion to attempt now to employ another term. I will only then beg you to remember, that what is about to be said of the priestly office has no concern whatever with us the ministers of the new Covenant, but regards solely the priests of the old Covenant, and that great High Priest whom they typified. Let us now see in what the essential character of the priest's office consists. It is a matter to be thankful for, that we have an Epistle, that to the Hebrews, written in great part on this very subject—the High-priesthood of Christ: and that on most of the points on which we have to speak, our ground is already assured for us in that Epistle. I take then from it the essential definition of a priest, of which I am in search: “Every high priest taken from among men (and the same might be said of the priest in general) is ordained for

men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin." And again, "Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices." Expanding then this description, we find that a priest is a man, taken from among men, one of them, and ordained, or set apart, in matters pertaining to God : having a sacred office and employment, which he carries on for and instead of his brethren, in sacred things, and as standing between them and God. Then the nature of this office is further described. It is, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin. In this latter, the essential employment of the priest lay. Every priest is set apart to offer gifts and sacrifices. And following on this description, it is said of Christ, "wherefore it is of necessity that this man also have somewhat to offer : " so that we see it was bound with the very idea of a priest that he should offer gifts and sacrifices for sin. And now let us observe the method of doing this under the law. The common lay Israelite, wishing to approach God, comes to the tabernacle, or to the temple, with his gift or sacrifice for sin. The gifts were to be brought to Aaron's sons the priests, and by them to be presented to God, by bringing them to his altar. The animals for sacrifice might be slain by the person himself who brought them, whoever he were. It is a mistake to suppose that it was any part of the priest's essential duty to kill the victim. Throughout the 3rd

chapter of Leviticus, where minute directions are given on this head, it is the person bringing the animal for sacrifice who himself kills it before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. But the office of the priest in each case was to take of the blood of the animal slain, and sprinkle it on the altar round about, or in some cases pour it out before the altar, to make an atonement for sin. This was the essential portion of the priest's office. He was not necessarily concerned in killing the victim: he might be thus concerned, and was probably often in fact, as being the minister of the tabernacle present and ready, and employed in killing the public sacrifices daily for Israel: but by the law, the bringer of the victim was to lay his hand on the head of the animal and himself to kill it. In the second and more important part of the sacrifice however, the priest alone could officiate. It was he alone who could make atonement for sin. And this atonement was not made in any case by the death of the animal, but by the sprinkling of the blood only. Let me prove this to you, for it is an important point and one on which much ignorance prevails, by the testimony of the law itself¹.

Now this distinction is of interest and importance as regards our Lord. Let us speak now of Him as our priest—bringing

¹ Levit. iv. 13—20, was read here.

out such points as we have already noticed of the priestly office, and then reserving our notice, as each further point arises: for so we shall keep your attention better than by first detailing the whole, and then expecting you to bear it in mind during the application. Now our Lord was at the same time the victim and the priest. As a priest, he must of necessity have somewhat to offer. And his offering was, himself. But first, He was devoted as a victim by the assembled elders of Israel. They took counsel, and one of them, who was High Priest that same year, unwittingly prophesied that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. In doing this, they as it were laid their hands on the head of the victim. It was they again who took him by means of Judas, they who delivered him to Pilate: they who by the hand of the lawless Gentiles, crucified and slew him. The Roman power was, so to speak, the mere axe, wherewith the victim was struck down outside the door of the tabernacle. Into all this humiliation and suffering did he consent to pass on our account, when he became obedient even to death. And in the issue he was made a victim for the sins of mankind, and he, commencing thereby his priestly office, did pour out his most precious blood upon the cross.

Now let us for a moment ask ourselves, what was this important part which the blood bore in the work of atonement? The blood was the

life. The pouring out of that, was the sure token that life had been sacrificed. The sprinkling of that on the offerer, on the vessels of the tabernacle, on the altar, as on the doorposts in the ordinance of the passover, was the applying to them, in a ceremonial figure, the virtue, whatever it was, of that life which had been thus taken: was making them partakers in whatever propitiation had been wrought by the sacrifice of that life. And now, in order to follow the priest in this work of atonement, let us pass to the one day in the year called especially the day of atonement, and so often alluded to in this Epistle to illustrate Christ's High-priesthood. On that day, as you will find detailed in the 16th chapter of Leviticus, the High Priest Aaron, having offered a victim for his own sins and for the sins of the people, was to take of the blood of both these, and go inside the veil which hung before the most holy place, and sprinkle that blood upon the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat: verses 16, 17. Now this part of the High Priest's office represents to us very exactly that which Christ has done and is doing for us. Let me give you the application of it to Him, not in my own words, but in those of the Epistle from which our text is taken².

Now you will see we have attained thus

² Heb. ix. 6—14, 24—26, was read here.

far in the elucidation of our subject. Christ our victim is slain. His blood is poured out on the cross. The cross, and the earth, are sprinkled with that blood. He himself, as our Priest, is baptized with it. And when that sacrifice was accomplished, He, our High Priest, went up, with the marks of the sacrifice upon him, the same Jesus, into the presence of God, there to plead the merits of his blood for us. And we are waiting, as the people waited without on that day of atonement, for him to come forth—to return again to bless us with the glorious effects of that his atonement, even everlasting salvation. The verses following the passage which I quoted express this very pointedly and clearly: “As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after that the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many: and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin (i.e. no more subject to the consequences of sin—with all that comes of sin for ever put away from Himself and from them) unto salvation.”

Now in this, the principal work of Christ's priestly office, there are several minor particulars, all of interest as further explaining and setting it forth. First regard the qualifications for the office itself, and his fulfilment of them. Of those qualifications the most notable was that the priest should be in all cases *without*

blemish. Thus we read, Lev. xxi. 21—23, “No man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the Lord made by fire: he hath a blemish: he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God. He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy: only he shall not go in unto the veil, nor come nigh the altar, because he hath a blemish: that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I the Lord do sanctify them.”

Now herein, all bodily freedom from blemish did but faintly set forth the purity and spotlessness of the Lord Jesus. “Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners³.” He is holy—partaking of the high and peculiar attribute of God with which no mere human priest could ever be clothed: uniting in himself the highest justice, and the highest purity, and the most perfect serenity, all of which together seem to make up that incommunicable quality of holiness, which, while we use the term only partially and sparingly of men, we reserve in our thoughts for God alone. Wherever Jesus was, at whatever stage of his humiliation, he was holy. He was holy as a child; holy in his simplicity, and his obedience, and in every growing thought and accession of manly wisdom

³ Heb. vii. 26.

which so mysteriously gathered around him. He was holy in all his public life: in every particular of his teaching, in every passage of his sharp conflict with his enemies. But it was when his priestly office, properly so called, begun, that his holiness was more than ever manifested forth. Behold him standing in the midst of his disciples and lifting up his eyes to heaven, and interceding for them and for his future people. Did ever human language reach the majesty, the pure compassion, the unbroken serenity of that his high-priestly prayer? Then watch him, as he passes through all that scene of sorrow beyond all other sorrow, that night of the power of darkness, with his human will, for a moment, shrinking from the vast suffering before him, but so quickly and so entirely subjected into accord with the will of the Father; yea watch him onward still, even to the trial and the buffeting and the cross; bears not every word and every gesture the same character of holiness; the same impress of majesty, and purity, and compassion? We who are his brethren and his followers, can thankfully contemplate all that night of agony and terror, all that day of cruel shame and suffering, without confessing one taint on the holiness of our Priest and our victim. Yea, we may stand beneath the cross, and had we never before beheld that expiring one, nor heard the words which came from his lips, might bear witness with the

Roman centurion, "Truly this was a righteous man."

Then again, our High Priest must be *harmless, undefiled*. And was not Jesus harmless? Who but he could stand before his bitter adversaries, and say, "which of you convicteth me of sin?" Mark how the Apostles, who consorted with him on earth, look back ever, as to a bright spot without clouds, on his perfect freedom from all spot of sin: St. Peter, who denied him, upon whom he cast that look of compassion in his own hour of deep suffering—"Ye were redeemed," he writes, "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;" and again, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who when he was reviled, reviled not again: when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." And St. John, the disciple whom he loved and who leaned on his bosom, says "We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." And again, "Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins: and in him is no sin." And,—"every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

The other point dwelt on in the passage whose terms we are following, is, that our high priest is *separate from sinners*. The priest of old was to be separated and set apart specially for God's

service. He was not to be mixed up with ordinary men in their worldly gains and struggles. The Lord his God was his inheritance : he had no portion of the land of promise, as had the children of Israel his brethren. The whole tribe of Levi, from one family of which the priests were taken, was left thus portionless, that they might take God for their portion, to whose special service they were devoted. And among that tribe, the priestly family was again selected out and distinguished ; and among that family again, the High Priest himself. He stood alone and separate from the people. But this also could be but a very faint representation of the separation from sinners of our great High Priest, Christ Jesus. The High Priest of old was himself a sinner : and so, in spite of all the fences wherewith the law hedged him about, must very often have been found mingled with sinners and with their sin : as indeed was Aaron himself on two lamentable occasions ⁴. But the Lord Jesus could say to his enemies, "Ye are from beneath, I am from above:" and even among his disciples, whom he had chosen out of the world, we ever find him in this one matter, separate from them, united as he is to them in all others. "For their sakes," he declares, "I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth."

⁴ Exod. xxxii. Numb. xii.

Notice too how he ever speaks of that paternal relation in which God stands both to himself, and in a sense, also to us. And this is a matter of some import to our present point. For it is being born of God, as St. John tells us, which constitutes the ground of sinlessness. "Whatsoever is born of God sinneth not:" i. e. it is the nature and proper state of every son of God to be without sin. Now we are liable to sin, because we are yet bound up with a body of sin. Our sonship is not perfect; is yet in the future, in its fulness and blessedness, and perfect union with our Father. But He, the eternal Son of God, possesses in all its fulness and entireness their sinlessness; and it is to be noted that in this point only does he ever speak of himself as separate from his brethren—never using the expression "our Father," but always "my Father" or "your Father," and on one memorable occasion after his resurrection, "my Father and your Father, and my God and your God:" thus separating himself, in this matter of his oneness with God, from us his people, who are sinners, wrapt up with a body of sinful flesh.

There are yet other points brought out in the Epistle to the Hebrews with regard to the High-priesthood of Christ. He must be a *merciful* High Priest, full of sympathy, knowing how to compassionate and to succour them that are tempted and led out of the way. And this end

he has attained, as I endeavoured to set before you in a sermon on the sympathy of Jesus last year, by being himself one of us—having himself gone through and borne our afflictions and infirmities: by having himself been tempted, and having drained to the very dregs the cup of suffering. As God, he knows what is in us: but as Man, he has felt our griefs and carried our sorrows. If ever the heathen poet could put it into the mouth of an ordinary character to say, “I am a man, and think nothing belonging to man alien from me,” how much more is this true of him, who only of all the sons of men is man in the highest and most comprehensive sense, wanting no human sympathy, responding to every chord of human feeling, unbiassed by selfish ends, and unhardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We are all drawn away from the right line of our sympathies by a thousand by-ends, and cramped in their exercise by the fetters of usage, and rendered uncertain in that exercise by the unworthiness of their objects, and by questions of social calculation and ultimate benefit or harm: but in him, none of these hindrances are present—with perfect knowledge he unites perfect love. He sees through, and if I may so say, he feels through, every heart that bleeds before him—he bears it as if it were his own, he chastens in mercy, or heals in smiting, just because he knows all and loves all: knows us, far better than we know our-

selves: loves us more, and more wisely, than any of us loves him.

Reserving for our next sermon, on the kingly office of Christ, the distinctness of his order of priesthood from the Levitical,—one more point, and that a most important one, yet remains for us to consider: the *efficacy*, and *finality*, of the High-priesthood of Christ. The description in the 7th of Hebrews on which I have been dwelling speaks of him, besides being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, as “made higher than the heavens;” and having no need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. His sacrifice was all-efficacious, and it was final. It was, in the studied and striking words of our liturgy, “a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.” “Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” “When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” And this efficacy of the atoning sacrifice of Christ is ever to be borne in mind as a distinct object of the Christian faith. If his death were merely to set us an example of lofty self-denial; merely to show forth to us the greatest possible triumph of love, then we are yet in our sins; for we want

that which may pay the penalty due for them to divine justice, and into the merit of which we may enter and be clear before God: and such an atonement we find in Christ's blood alone; in the merits of that one sacrifice, applied to the sinful soul by faith in him. That blood the humble believer takes spiritually and sprinkles, even as did Israel of old outwardly in the passover, on the inward parts of his spiritual habitation: by means of it he is acquitted, nay justified, in the sight of the God of holiness and truth: with it upon him, he is safe from wrath, safe from danger, safe from condemnation: with it upon him, he can penetrate in prayer and in praise within the veil, yea into the very presence and reconciled favour of Him who is, out of Christ, a consuming fire: with it upon him, he can stand an accepted child of God: and in humble confidence claim, and share, and grow in, that gift of his Father which Jesus won for men, even his comforting, teaching, sanctifying Spirit. So that in the poured out blood of Jesus, we have all we can want: pardon, acceptance, renewal unto righteousness. We have all we want: and we therefore want no more. His everlasting priesthood is enough for us. That he is in heaven, appearing for us, makes all human mediators vain and needless. That he has offered himself for us, makes all other sacrifices valueless. There is now no more a sacrificing priesthood: no more

need of offering for sin : for all sin is included in, or taken away by, that one offering of the one priest on the one altar. We have but to take shelter in the efficacy of that sacrifice, and all is well. Away then with all thoughts of men ordained and consecrated, offering Christ for us. We know whom we have believed, and we know what he did for us, and we can approach him each one for himself, each one at any time, each one in his weakness, in his contrition, in his despondency of himself. We want no smoothings of the way to him, but the breaking up of our own hard hearts ; the filling up of the valleys of our degradation, and pulling down the high places of our pride : but no man, nor angel, may stand henceforth between the High Priest and his people ; between the Redeemer and his redeemed ; between the Shepherd and the simplest lamb of his flock.

Yet if we must think of God as in his holy temple, and of ministering priests serving him with manifold offerings, there is a priesthood yet, and there is an offering, though not for sin. Christ hath made all his people into spiritual priests. Every believer, however humble, is a priest unto God ; a priest of the tabernacle which God built and not men, to offer up the sacrifice of thanksgiving, even his body, soul, and spirit, consecrated and devoted to God's service. This is the priesthood of the Christian temple, borne by men, and women, and little children ;

exercised day and night ; in the street, in the family, in the closet, on the sick bed ; with men applauding, or with men reviling ; exercised by ministering thousands, lifting their thoughts in prayer morning and evening, and at noonday, and at midnight. These are God's priests : and all find their head, and their access, and their fulness of joy, in that one great High Priest, who alone in his merit, and alone in his mediation, stands pleading before the throne ; never slumbering nor sleeping—bearing them in his heart as He bore their sins on his body on the tree—as He bore their life up from the sepulchre and has hidden it with Himself in God.

And thou, my brother, my sister, where art thou in this glorious temple of God's universal church and priesthood ? I ask not after thy worldly rank, thy birth, or wealth, or self-esteem or esteem by others ; but after thy place in that temple. Art thou a priest of God by faith in Christ ? Art thou offering ? Art thou praying ? Art thou standing before some altar of faithful obedience, with the light of thy reconciled Father's presence over thee, and the incense of fervent prayer rising about thee, and ministering there through thy great High Priest to thy God ? Or art thou, in that temple of heaven and earth which He has fitted up for His worshippers, trifling, serving self and serving the world ; sporting with the foolish toys of rank and fashion and earthly pride ; casting

away thy glorious priesthood and spurning thine everlasting birthright for a few paltry sweetmeats of this pretended feast below? It is a question for me to ask, but a question for thee to answer, faithfully, honestly, unshrinkingly.

Thine High Priest is gone up to the holy place. He is there before God, transacting his mighty mediation, wielding the power of his intercession for thee, for me, for all. Heaven and earth are waiting till he shall come forth again. Every soul of his people is waiting; nature is waiting, travailing together in pain till that morning of joy. Art thou waiting? or hast thou forgotten Him?

O in the hour when He shall again come forth to his people; when that bright countenance shall again gladden heaven and earth, and those hands shall again be lifted to bless us, may you and I be found sprinkled with his atoning blood, seasoned with the holiness of his Spirit,—ready and joyful to rise with him, through the power of his everlasting priesthood, into the triumph of his glorious kingdom!

SERMON X.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

1857.

REV. xix. 16.

“ He hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING of kings, and LORD of lords.”

WE have contemplated Jesus as our Prophet, to teach us, and as our Priest to offer himself and to intercede for us. We have yet to speak of him as our King to reign over us. And of all characters, this is the one which most properly belongs to him: into which the others merge, and in which they find their end and accomplishment. In the same prophecy of him where it is said “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,” it is also said “I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.” And in speaking of the final object of all his mediatorial work, St. Paul says, “To this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living.”

In treating to-day of his kingly office, I will first speak of it in its proper and eternal aspect, and then follow it through his humiliation, and his triumph, to its future completion, when He shall be glorified in his people.

The office then of King belongs to him by eternal right, inasmuch as he is the Son of God. The Father constituted him heir of all things. Being the express image of his person, and the visible shining forth of his glory, it is he who is to all created being its lord and ruler and manifested King. We are the work of his hands : we, and all our world. We owe him allegiance by the very fact of our birth and our being. And we are the kings of earth ; in our hand hath he put all the tribes of his creation : in our hands all the wonders of capacity latent in his inanimate works. We, and all this our dominion over which we reign, are his. And not we and our world only. Whether there are other worlds like our own, peopled with rational beings, we cannot tell : we love to think so, and to believe that those bright orbs which travel, like our own, through celestial space, bear each its freight of multitudinous life and thought and joy. However this may be ; whether the vast universe be full or be void, whether He have created many to praise him or few, all are his, and he is their King, and they serve him. But if we rise above corporeal being, we pass from uncertainty to cer-

tainty ; we know that there are hosts of happy spirits, rising through all the gradations of created glory, even to the very presence of God, and the skirts of the brightness which flows round and veils the eternal throne. These too, however lofty and holy, are his : Him they acknowledge as their King and Lord, by the very condition of their angelic being.

Behold him then, the Head over all things : the rightful and everlasting sovereign of the universe of God. Such spectacle we might contemplate with adoration ; with wonder, the more we thought, at his unapproachable majesty and power : but it has pleased Him to reveal to us greater things than these. The kingdom which He possesses from original and unquestioned right is indeed wonderful and glorious : but the kingdom which he has won for himself over and beyond that, in the narrow limits of space and time, is far more wonderful, surpassingly more glorious. The throne of majesty was not enough for him : He must win a higher throne of love. To wield the sceptre which all must obey, seemed unto him but a small thing. He reached out for and he hath grasped, another sceptre, even that of soft persuasion and transforming sympathy. To stand by the throne of God and rule, satisfied not the yearnings of his heart : He must come down among his own creatures, and endure the contradiction of sinners against himself, and resist, striving unto

blood: and fight and fall, but conquer while He fell, with the weapons of redeeming love. It was not enough for Him, to have created man in God's image, after his likeness; to be the rightful Head by creative lordship over their nature, the wonder of his universe: but when that image was marred, He must himself descend into the tabernacle of the flesh, and gain for himself another and a closer headship and kingship—so that he is now not only the Son of God, but the Son of man: has not only his supreme and undoubted rights over our nature *ab extra*, as its God and Creator, but also rights far more wonderful *ab intra*, inasmuch as he is its second head and righteous root, and blessed renewer in righteousness.

Let us pursue a few of the grounds and details of this his sovereignty. He is king of man, inasmuch as he is the only man who has ever fulfilled manhood. The right employ of this nature of ours, with all its marvellous faculties and capacities, is to be perfect in the image of God. Here, with unsinning obedience, begun its career of advance. In that field and from that point was its upward course to be found. But the first man forfeited that place by disobedience; and, as our parent stock involved us in his incapacity, no man since then has fulfilled the end of his being. Men have sought each one his own way; none hath been able to gather up the fragments of

the wreck of our nature ; none, to renew himself or another unto righteousness. But the Lord Jesus carried humanity to its perfection, walking in the Father's will holy and blameless, increasing in wisdom as in age and in favour with God and man : and when his earthly course of subjection in unseen retirement was at an end, and his public ministry was about to begin, he received from the Father the solemn approval of his perfect obedience. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And by this perfection, among other rights, has the Lord Jesus become King and Head of our human nature. The idea comes distinctly forward in Scripture. "There shall come forth," we read in Isa. xi., "a rod out of the stem (the cut down stem, or stool of the tree) of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots : and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him." With this compare Jer. xxiii. 5, "I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper." And Zech. vi. 12, "Behold the man whose name is the Branch, and he shall grow up out of his place and he shall build the temple of the Lord : even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall have the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne." In this his capacity then as the righteous One, he is the King of us all, and of our world, of which, though originally subjected to us, we have well nigh

lost the proper lordship. Just as a king is the fountain of honour and the pattern of right, so is Christ the spring of all that is holy and perfect in our nature, and the spotless example of all that is just and pure and lovely in the whole race of mankind. Every human soul looks up to him, and beholds in him the only perfect image of God. Hence it is, that that most blessed and endearing title "the Son of man," is made by our Lord to carry with it so many weighty consequences and so many kingly rights. It is as if mankind had never before had a son, never aught before but rebellious and disinherited children, and this were the first-fruit and only worthy offspring of our common stock. And therefore at his birth, the great family cries out, with the joy of the human household, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given."

Christ then is King of our race and of our world, because he is the only one of that race who has ever worthily fulfilled its ends: the only one who has in our nature lived in harmony with God, and thus inherited the dominion prepared for and promised to man. But, and this second reason is intimately connected with and springs out of the first, he is our King also, because he is the Head of our common nature. The first Adam, when he came from God's hands, was made in God's image. He included in himself all of us, and he was holy, pure, happy, like God. He was the great root and head of

humanity. And when God was pleased to create an helpmate for him, he did not thereby lose this pre-eminence; for she was taken out of him. But when he sinned,—when he turned that freewill which was given him in virtue of his high place in God's creation, away from his Maker to the indulgence of his own desires, though he retained indeed the actual progenitorship of our race, he lost that nobler headship which belonged to him when he was in God's perfect image: he became the corrupt and sinful head of our nature: "in Adam all die." Now what was thus lost in Adam, has been gloriously regained for us in Christ. He has taken upon him, not as some of the ancient heretics fancied, the person of a man, but he has taken unto his personal Godhead our whole and entire nature, as complete as it was in Adam, and as free from taint as it was when Adam was created in it; and on account of this his being the second root or head of our common nature, and on no other account, it is, that every man has a part in Christ, that we preach Christ the Saviour of the world, and call on all to look unto him and be saved. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." And on this account also, just as Adam stood in his uprightness and innocence in that garden of Eden, the head and root and king of mankind, so Christ stands in his perfect holiness and sinlessness at the right hand of

God the head and root and king of mankind : the author of life, even to those who know him not ; for in him our whole race, every man, woman and child of it, exists and holds together in God's universe and before God : and the author of higher and spiritual life to those that know and obey him, even of eternal salvation, in the restoration of the divine image by the power of his indwelling Spirit. He thus is rightful and undoubted king of that nature of ours, and of all that it has and rules, by virtue of his including it all in himself, and standing before God as man ; all we and our world being contemplated by the Father as existent solely in and because of, and as summed up in, him.

Advancing onward again with those new titles to kingship which he who by his own right was king, has been in the process of Redemption pleased to make for himself, we come to this one ; that he has, besides his perfection in our nature, besides his headship over it, purchased it to himself by the price of his own precious blood. Not only is he the light of the world, not only is he the second Adam, but he is the Redeemer. Humanity lay powerless and lost, and in its blood : death-stricken, and living only for its own mischief and ruin. Our race was led captive by its enemy, the devil. He had subjugated, he had bound in chains, he had claimed for his, the body, soul and spirit of man. Witness the dark chronicles

of the heathen world : witness the record of the rebellions of God's chosen people : witness the degradation, almost to mere animal life, of hundreds of human tribes, once in possession of primæval truth, and lifting their hands to God. In this our misery, the Son of God beheld us. He saw the burden of guilt, pressing us to the earth. Nay, he had seen it in his omniscience, from everlasting : and he had predetermined to come down and descend into meanness and obscurity and weakness and sorrow, and to taste of the bitter cup of agony, and to suffer a violent death of shame, to buy off this degraded race, to justify this guilty race, to save this lost race. And all this he did ; be Bethlehem witness, be Nazareth witness, be Calvary witness : be witnesses all those things which are recorded of him, and all those many more which speak from his life and sufferings though unrecorded. He became our representative, not in perfection only, not in entireness of bearing our nature only, but inasmuch as he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, and bowed under the burden of the world's guilt in his own body on the cross, and came up out of death triumphant, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. And there is no ground of his kingship, of which more is made in the Scriptures than this. When we are permitted to see him described to us as on the throne of his glory, it is

distinctly as the Lamb that has been slain : it is his death, and his atonement, and his purchase of us thereby to be his own, which are ever uplifted as motives to us why we should yield ourselves to him as his subjects. “Ye are bought with a price : ye are not your own.” “Being redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.” “If,” says the Apostle Paul, “one died instead of all, then all died : and he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.” And the cogency of this argument extends further than we might at first sight suppose. It is not a mere debt of gratitude which we are thus called on to pay. It might be that indeed, and such a debt as never was urged on any one of us to any living being ; but that is not all. It is absolutely on account of that satisfaction of Christ on the cross, on that Friday, outside Jerusalem, that this world and all that is therein, and we the lords of this world, are existing before God at this moment. Had no such satisfaction been in God’s eternal purposes wrought out,—had the Lamb not been slain from before the foundation of the world, man’s sin would have been, not potentially but actually, man’s destruction : the first act of disobedience would have been the last act of life : and the tribes of creation, and the whole material system

which was dependent on and involved in man, would have dropped out from God's universe as soon as sin had tainted it. For God and evil, God and impurity, cannot exist face to face: nor can he permit an unconquered antagonist in that universe which he hath created. But because, in the eternal verities of God, who counts not time, but sees as present all that happens in all time, Jesus had suffered, had died, had risen again, man was spared, nature was spared: the sun was commanded to shine on the evil and on the good, and the rain to rain on the just and on the unjust. So that as we are told, "in Christ all things consist," have their being: and to him alone this existence of ours, and of things around us, this life and motion, and joy, and increase, is owing from moment to moment. Then, has he not a right to it all, as his? to us, and to all that is ours? to all that would have perished with us had he not died, but which is now preserved to us and to him? Of the consequences of that right we will presently speak: but now let us follow on in the direct line of our argument.

On all these accounts, he is a king. And if he is a King, he has a kingdom. And what is his kingdom? In that wider sense in which we have treated of his sovereignty, it is the universe of God: all that ever was and is and shall be: but of that his kingdom we will not now speak. It is too wide a range, and too

sublime a topic, for our home thoughts to find their employ in : too vast and vague a matter, for you to take away with you, clinging to your minds, and working in your daily life-springs of action. Let us rather tell of the issues of that lower and more limited kingdom, which he hath won here below among us, and see whether that have not for us a voice within our hearts, and a claim which grasps at the threads of our common motives and affections. Christ is the King of man. Who remembers this, who acts upon this, as he ought? Every man on earth is Christ's subject : he is your king and my king, and the king even of the poor heathen who know him not : for he hath bought us all for himself : he is thus our rightful king : and it is a claim which he will not forego. In that sublime description from his own lips, of the gathering of all nations before him, for the first and only time does he call himself "the King"—"Then shall the King say." And for this reason ; that there will be the great and final assertion of his regal power over man ; over every man ; over all mankind in its entirety : there will be the Head, and there all the members, there the stock and there every branch of that marvellous plant of humanity, the flower and crown of the works of God. This will be then in one sense his kingdom : and this kingdom he will finally establish over friend and foe in the day of his power. You

cannot resist Christ : you cannot neglect Christ : you cannot escape Christ. All kings shall bow down before him : all nations shall do him service. But O dear friends, it was not for this that he won for himself a kingdom ; not for this, that the wheels of his chariot might crush down all that opposeth, that he might hear his enemies calling on the rocks to fall on them, and the hills to cover them ; no, for he is, as we have seen, not only a king of right, but a king of righteousness to the sons of men. When Pilate asked him in the hour of his deepest humiliation, “ Art thou a king then ? ” in asserting his kingship, he added “ For this cause was I born and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth.” And in this his kingdom also consists, as we saw at the beginning of our discourse that his kingship did : that he is the fountain and perfection and example and centre of that which is *true* ; “ Every one that is of the truth heareth his voice.” There is no truth, but in him : and whatsoever is true is his, part of his kingdom, and woven into his design, and blessed by his sanction, and matured by his fostering Spirit. Here is the Redeemer’s more glorious, more heavenly kingdom ; the kingdom of truth, and purity, and holiness, and love. Here, he has no unwilling, no rebellious subjects ; none to be crushed down, none to be driven away : all that are of the truth love him and seek him and fol-

low him, and shall stand by him even when he is on his throne of judgment, and shall see his glory, and shall be with him where he is for ever.

But the question arises, it may be, in many minds here listening to me, What is this truth of which he is speaking? Is it truth in science merely—is it truth in art—those subtle powers of harmonizing with God's creative laws, which seem as if they might and do exist where there is no deeper truth of heart and life? Is it in a word, any of those outlying branches of truth, which seem as if they were rooted in earth for themselves, and got no life from the parent stem? Let us reply to this in his own words "I am the way and the truth and the life." It is He who has revealed to us the truth, and he has revealed it in himself. And as he is the revelation and the fountain of truth, so in order to be a subject of his blessed kingdom of truth, must a man enter into it by him: by knowing him and believing him, and being knit unto him, and living his common life by virtue of faith in him. And this is that of which he himself speaks, when he said to the enquiring Pharisee, "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." His Spirit must work within: he must convict a man of unworthiness in himself, he must shew him his need of that which Christ can give: must bring him to Christ as his king of grace, of mercy, of peace, of love, of pardon, of righte-

ousness, of glory. And suppose not that in saying this I am laying down any narrow system of artificial boundaries to Christ's spiritual kingdom. No, brethren, God forbid that I should. Neither you nor I have been thus taught the truth as it is in Him. The infinite varieties of the countenance of man,—the myriad tones of differing voices,—the unlimited play of the winds which breathe free through the heaven, these are but feeble parables to set forth the boundless freedom and various action of the spirit of our being, and the infinite shades of difference between the subjects of his spiritual kingdom. With much knowledge, or with little; with much feeling, or with little; with much profession, or with none; within or without the boundaries of the churches on earth; it is all one to Him, with whom all things are possible, to convict, to convert, to save, the sons of men. There is no limitation in these words, "He that hath the Son of God, hath life:" none, in the saying of our King Himself, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." All I insist on is, that this process of self-renunciation, this acceptance of him as King, and of his Spirit as guide of his life, must accompany all effectual entrance, with the will and the affection, into his kingdom of grace—all heirship of his kingdom of glory.

Such a kingdom then is God establishing on earth among men : a kingdom of truth and

mercy and love, of which his Son is the Head and King. Day by day He is calling its subjects out from among the falsehood and the strife which is the rule of life of this world. Week after week He calls you, my brethren, each of you, to come out from the world and belong to his kingdom. Among the nations, He is preparing it; in his own way, not in ours. He is still suffering the darkness to prevail over wide tracts of this earth: still permitting the oppressor to oppress, and the truth to be kept down: but it is that that truth, by trial and by sifting, may become purer and surer. We know, that let men strive against it as they will, let appearances tend never so much to the contrary, He is even now, and has been ever since our Redeemer's exaltation, putting all things under his feet. And we look for a day when that his Kingdom, which sprung not out of this world, shall yet be manifested in this world and rule over this world. Our efforts for good, scattered as they are, and almost hopeless as they may sometimes seem, are not mere expiring efforts of a light which is being overborne and crushed: but they are all portions of one great war against evil, led on by the King of truth, prompted by the Spirit of truth, and destined to issue in the establishment of the kingdom of truth on earth.

But we are called on by our text to look forward further even than this. Its words treat

of a time when Christ's kingdom shall have passed altogether out of conflict into triumph, out of grace into glory. What relation that final state may bear to the full recognition and presence of his kingdom on earth, we cannot tell: whether it shall be an intensification, or a translation of it; whether situate here, or in some other more favoured portion of the universe of God. However these things may be, one thing is certain: that such perfection of his kingdom will come. When every foe shall have been cast out, and every rebel thought subdued, and every conflict past, then his people, they who have acknowledged him in gainsaying and trial for the King of their spirits and the Lord of their lives, shall reign with him in his glory, and be his servants round his throne.

Well then, brethren, it seems that it is for us to choose this day whom we will serve: whether the usurper who now sways the world, whom the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life, are obeying: who is the lawgiver of the sons of men by nature, and sets the rules and maxims of what is called society by them: whether we will serve him, and be safe in the world's esteem, and walk by his rule of expediency, and public opinion, and keeping things safe, and letting well alone: or whether even now, now that religion has become well nigh an empty boast in our land, a

mere dead body to fight over, instead of a living reality to fight for, we will serve another forgotten and rejected king, even Jesus: whether we will really stand and wage his battles with wrong, with hypocrisy, with falsehood, at the risk of our good names, our safe reputations, our worldly prospects. As we make this choice now, so shall we be rejoicing in Him, or be crushed by Him, when He cometh in his kingdom.

SERMON XI.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

1857.

LUKE xviii. 31.

“ Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished.”

IF what we have hitherto said of our blessed Lord be true : viz. that being the eternal Word, the Son of God, He had from everlasting the design of becoming man, and of suffering and dying for man's sin, which he foresaw : and if it be also true, that God from the very time of the fall did train and prepare mankind for having this purpose carried out in the world, as well by his providential government, as by direct revelation : then we may expect to find, both in God's acts and in God's words of old times, i. e. in the history of the world and in the Scriptures, intimations of the coming Redeemer, and of that which He was about to do

and suffer. Those traceable in the history of the world have more than once formed the subject of our consideration already, and may perhaps be again introduced in this course on the Person and Office of our Lord. This morning I purpose treating of that other large class of intimations of the coming Saviour, which are found in the Old Testament Scriptures: just setting before you, as I may be enabled, a view of the course of ancient prophecy, and in this way, touching upon some of its principal epochs and examples. In passing on, we shall have occasion to speak on several interesting points connected with the understanding, as prophetic of Him, and interpretation when so understood, of the course of individual and national utterance in that ancient word of God.

We said that it is our belief, that from the time of the fall, God was preparing the nations for the Messiah to come. Do we find traces of this in his written word? We believe, and the Church has ever believed, that such traces are found, in the terms of the primæval judgment of our first parents by God. Let us candidly examine this belief, and endeavour to set it not only on the ground of a constant and unvarying Christian interpretation, but on its own common sense ground, apart from any history of interpretation. Our parents had been deceived by the tempter under the form of the serpent. From being in union with God and

his will, they had placed themselves under the persuasion of the serpent, and become obedient to him. We might expect to find then, that the judicial punishment for this their sin would be, that they should be left in that captivity which themselves had chosen: that union with the foul deceiver would be their future condition. But we do not find this, nor indeed any thing approaching to it. The first declaration of God is, a curse upon the serpent, and a proclamation of enmity between its seed and the seed of the woman. And these last words again call for our attention. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." But what do we now hear of? A curse indeed pronounced in measure on the woman, by whom sin had entered the world: but one which in its very circumstances is full of blessing, being accompanied with gracious promise of continued life. Who that knows a mother's heart, will doubt, that whatever grief these words, "in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children," might have borne to Eve, the joy was greater than the grief? for they spoke not of extinction, but of almost endless future generations: of times indeed of peril and trial, but also of anguish which should be remembered no more, for joy that a man was born into the world. And so, immediately after, we read that Adam "called his wife's name Eve, because she was mother of all living." This, and not the other, was the prevailing feeling in

the mind of our first parent. And how natural, and characteristic of a race which is saved by hope, that it should be so. But there is more yet in this primæval record of God's grace and man's unworthiness. With this seed of the woman, as it should be born from her and her descendants, is bound up the enmity with the serpent. Take the narrative in its literal plainness and simplicity, and what does that mean? The serpent was to Adam and Eve the power of evil. Its evil had ruined them. But it, and its evil, were not to prevail: the battle might be short or might be long: at length, however, it should be decided against the tempter by the woman's seed, though hurt and loss might be incurred in the conflict: "It shall bruise thy head," God said to the serpent, "and thou shalt bruise his heel." Here then was hope: and with a view to the thorough understanding of this first promise, let us trace it onward. In course of time, a son is born to Eve. She exclaims "I have gotten a man"—the seed is come. But, alas! the anticipated victory is turned into dark and shameful defeat. The first seed of the woman proves a murderer: the bruise on the heel is a sharp and a heavy one: one that shall cripple mankind for ages: and hope is yet deferred. Then observe. "She bare yet a son and called his name Seth, 'the appointed one:' for God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel whom Cain slew."

And this time it was not all disappointment; but how? "Then," we read, "began men to call upon the name of the Lord." They began to see that not then, nor in their lifetimes, would that victory over the tempter be achieved: but that prayer must be offered up, and ages must pass, and the prisoners of hope must watch many a day, and then at last the deliverance would come. And indeed as time passed on, all strength of hope and faith was required. For the power of the serpent seemed to increase, and evil overspread the earth. Still the promise had not lost its power: we yet find men like Noah, perfect in their generations, walking with God. In the descent of the patriarchal line, we have abundant intimations that the ancient hope survived: indications too, that the minds of the faithful were continually reaching forward in expectation towards a deliverer. We may imagine with what longing for the promised grace to appear, Lamech called his son Noah, or rest, or comfort, saying, "This son shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." For the day was a dark day: evil had increased upon the earth, and violence overspread it. The bruising of the serpent's head seemed further off than ever. Yet it would be not unreasonable to infer from such expressions as the one which I have quoted, that again and again did the promised Deliverer

seem to have been granted, and to have been born into the world. And as each such assurance ended in disappointment, it brought, like other disappointments, its lesson with it, and that was every time a lesson of deeper hope in God, and more confiding trust, and more entire self-resignation. And thus the promise of the seed of the woman, which seems at first to have been understood to point to some one who should be soon born of man into this world, gradually lost in men's estimation this reference, and was thought of as some one whom God would send, some commissioned and heavenly Deliverer. At length Abraham, the friend of God, is called out from among the nations, and made to be the vehicle of great and exceeding precious promises, now more plain and defined. But they are all in the same strain: they still speak of his seed, in whom all families of the earth were to be blessed: his seed, to whom the land was to be given: his seed, which should come of one, and in one line, and that the predetermined line of promise.

Now in all this, I see the evident meaning, I see the persistence, I see the renewal of that first merciful announcement, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. I can see in that promise, full as it was of hope, full of life, and action, and victory to come, something upon which the early church of God

might begin its course of conflict with evil: I can see how men's thoughts, gathering ever round the bright point of certain ultimate victory in God, in his light saw light, and became themselves penetrated with light, and sought for more and more of his divine illumination, and were vouchsafed new revelations, and more definite notices of their coming deliverance. For we ought never to forget, though perhaps we are apt to forget, that prophecy had in fact commonly two sides; a supernatural revelation made from God, and at the same time faith and prayer and earnest seeking of God on the part of those to whom that revelation was made.

“The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy:” and though some of the most notable prophecies came in the darkest times, yet they came by holy and earnest men, living in close communion with God, and God in fact gave them this testimony that they pleased him,—that he revealed to them deep things by his Spirit, which they gave forth to the Church and to the world for their guidance, as utterances of God. Now why I am saying this, and the point to which I am drawing your thoughts, is, that you may be prepared for that view of Old Testament prophecy of Christ, which the doubter and the unbeliever entirely misses, but which is I think beyond all question the right one,—viz. that beginning as it did from an apparently vague and undefined promise, it did,

so to speak, roll onwards, and increase in definiteness and in largeness and in personal reference, even as men's minds became expanded and uplifted and spiritualized by it: until it arrived at this, that the natural hopes of God's people, the royal character of their kings, the sanctity of their priests and prophets, the aspirings, and the convictions, and the conflicts of individuals, did naturally and necessarily run up into and centre in the great Deliverer to come: so that all that was said by Israel of Israel's hopes, by kings of their kingly acts, by prophets of the Spirit which wrought in them, by penitent sinners of God's pardoning grace, by thankful saints of his boundless mercy,—all that was prayed by suppliant, or proclaimed by preacher, or chanted by Psalmist,—was said, and sung, and declared, of and by and for Him in whom all fulness dwells of pardon and of joy and of holiness: so that the babe in Israel lisped out Christ: and the youths and maidens, in the joy of their feasts, uttered his praises; and the shepherd who watched by his flock sang of him; and the royal bard, in his troubles or his joys, never spake of himself, but his words sparkled with new life when peopled with Him. Yea, so entirely do I believe this of all the utterances of Israel in those wonderful pages, that I regard the whole nation as one vast instrument tuned by God's hand and swept by the fingers of his Spirit, and yielding for time and

for eternity, yielding in its unison, and in its harmonies, yea and in its discords, one master-theme alone, and that theme is, Him that should come—the Son of God—Christ Jesus my Lord.

But, it is urged, the history of that people is strange and fickle and tumultuous: a swelling ocean, full of dark billows of cruelty and treachery and crime. True, it is even so; and there may be those who toil in rowing through it and make no way onward: yet I would say, shew it me at its gloomiest point, when the clouds are wildest and the waves surge highest: amidst the idolatries of Baal-peor, or the apostasies of Samaria, or the blackest crimes of the royal saint himself; take me to the very midnight of those troubled waters,—I can still see his form walking on their surface; can still hear his voice saying “It is I: be not afraid;” can still take Him into my ship, and be immediately at the land whither I am bound—even the firm footing of God’s everlasting and immoveable covenant. And even thus it is, my brethren, that the Old Testament is to us no collection of ancient legends, no mere venerable monument of true world-histories, but that which testifies of Christ: this is its office, this its voice, heard the more and recognized the more, the more we advance in humility and faith and spiritual wisdom. Thus it is, that when the Lord himself and his

Apostles take the ordinary words of that book, and apply them at once to Him, we are prepared to maintain, that for this no wresting, no accommodation of them is required, but that whatever immediate personal meaning they may have borne when uttered, their sense was never so deep, their reference never so true, their living power never so real, as when they are said of Him: that in all that is mere man they may find here and there a partial fulfilment, but that in Him alone their whole extent, in length and breadth and height and depth, is exhausted and surpassed.

And in this the only true and worthy view of Old Testament prophecy of Christ, how his glorious Person and Office grow upon us, as we pass on in the sacred books! From the promises made to the patriarchs, to the types of the law: from the types of the law, to the precious book of Psalms, glittering like a cluster of gems with a thousand shifting hues of Him; clear with his purity, bright with his graces, nor wanting the shade of his sufferings: and from that, onward to the yet plainer voices of the prophets; to the Gospel according to Isaiah, His birth, and his testimony, and his passion, and his death, and his triumph; and those other following manly voices, filled and deepened by the Spirit, which one after another cried aloud of Him, even till that last one, who spoke of his

messenger that should prepare his way before him, and of his coming suddenly to his temple, as a refiner's fire, to purify his people.

Such was Old Testament prophecy—and such, being, as it was, but an echo caught on earth from the everlasting designs of God in heaven, our Saviour came to fulfil. It was among men the extant symbol and token of the divine purpose. When He was approaching this or that portion of his appointed course, we ever read that it was done that the Scripture might be fulfilled. For the Scripture testimony lay before men, plain, palpable, unalterable. Whatever He might declare to them respecting the will and purpose of the Father, must be believed, must be taken on trust, on his own authority. But here was something to appeal to, apparently, and in men's sight, out of and beyond himself; a test which he answered; a requirement, which he fulfilled and exhausted. Hence the immense importance of Christ's office as the fulfiller of prophecy. Nor did that importance by any means cease with his life on earth, or even with his rising from the dead according to the Scriptures. In conversing with his disciples, already persuaded and believing in him, after his resurrection, when he wants to deepen their trust and to enlighten their understandings respecting him and his work, he says to them, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have

spoken ! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ?” “ And,” we read, “ beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” And when He was gone up from them into heaven, it was the same : the same argument was ever urged by the Apostles, by St. Paul and the rest, “ Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ?” “ And they mightily convinced the Jews and that publicly, proving by the Scriptures that this man is very Christ.”

Now, brethren, we too possess this evidence to Christ : we too are permitted to search those Scriptures which testify of Him. And let us ask ourselves what exactly is the advantage to us modern Christians, in having all this previous testimony to him before us ? And our answer is, with St. Paul, “ Much every way.” For first, we have the key to the world’s history. From those books of prophecy, and prophetic record, we know that man was not left in the wreck of his fall to plunge about in helplessness, and be dashed on the rugged shore to which the adversary had been permitted to drive him : but that God from the first had him in his care, and was preparing for him a mighty deliverance. Thus, though there is much remaining that we cannot understand, we are enabled to feel, that it was all part of

this great preparation, not indeed yet in all nations accomplished, of man for Christ: a working, in that spirit of man which must be persuaded in order to be healed, a sense of its own guilt and unworthiness before God, that when the Saviour cometh, whether in the flesh, or by the preaching of the word, He may find those who shall receive him, and in whom his word may gain ground and go forward. This is our first advantage: and it is no mean one. The world is to us no play-place of blind and godless chance, but the theatre of the unfolding of the everlasting purposes of our God.

And another advantage follows close upon this. It would be some gain to have *any* solution of the world's great riddle; any certain persuasion on which we might rest in safety as to the uncertainties around us: but we have not only that. This solution brings in as the key to all things on earth, not some barren abstract principle which we might believe as we do a fact in science, and deduce its results in our heads, and be none the better for them: but Him who is the very centre and spring of our life and our love and all our energy, if we be Christians at all, even Jesus our Lord. It is no rigid law of physical or moral force which has propelled man and man's world all these ages: it were something even to have detected such a law: something, for example, to have discovered that motion according to the in-

verse square of the distance, by which the order of the physical universe is regulated: but this is a living, almighty agent, full of love and mercy, and made to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: and to have discovered Him in the world, is not something merely, no mere addition to knowledge, no discovery to make one man's fame; but it is every thing; all a man's desire and hope and life; to know Christ, and behold Him every where, and to live, and read, and be persuaded, in the faith of Him.

And another immense advantage resulting to us from the ancient Scripture testimony of Christ, is this; that it is so ample, so deep, so divine, that it is capable of unfolding to us ever fresh truths respecting his Person and Office, which we knew not before. It is an inexhaustible treasury of knowledge of Christ. In types, in psalms, in prophets, the humble and diligent student ever finds more and more of Him; ever learns more boldness in applying all to Him, and thus obtains fresh light cast on his fulness of grace and truth, which to see and to partake of by the Spirit, is life eternal.

And we, my brethren, are now approaching that season, at the end of which the accomplishment of all these things written of the Son of man will be abundantly brought before us. The intervening Sundays will be best devoted,

as is a common and salutary custom, to close practical preaching: to enquiry into, and suggestions for the amendment of, our own manifold deficiencies. I will therefore suspend in the main, during Lent, this course on the Person and Office of our Lord, and hope to resume it when we are called on to speak more especially of his sufferings and death for the sin of the world.

Meantime, as we have seen Him set before us to-day, so may we believe in Him; as the one subject of all God's dealings, all God's revelations: the One, in whom all the promises of Scripture are yea and amen to the glory of God by us.

SERMON XII.

GOOD FRIDAY.

1857.

1 JOHN ii. 2.

“He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

I RESUME to-day the course of sermons on the Person and Office of Christ, which the season of Lent has suspended. And I wish to speak, as belonging especially to the solemn subject of the day, of Him as the propitiation for sin. I may remind you that this portion of his work has been more than once approached during the present course, and more than once directly touched on in former sermons. We have endeavoured to put in a clear light before you that foundation truth of the doctrine of the Atonement, the inclusive Headship of our nature by the Lord Jesus: to declare to you that which St. Paul so simply and pithily states, “If one died for all, then all died:” and this

as opposed to the unscriptural notion that Jesus as a man, was substituted for us men, bearing, as he then could only, his own individual burden, not that of our whole nature. I will not go over that old, and I would fain believe, familiar ground, to-day. I would hope that with these first principles of the doctrine of Christ I may presume you to be by this time acquainted, and ready to build upon them further and more advanced truths. I shall deal to-day with the importance, and indeed the necessity, to the Christian, of regarding Christ's death strictly as an expiation, or propitiation, for sin. It has been much the practice of late to drop this way of speaking and writing of the death of the Lord: to consider the idea of propitiation as belonging only to Jewish sacrificial associations, and having nothing to do with the spiritual religion of the Christian. Now such a habit is only part of a system which is stealthily and rapidly, I fear, creeping onward in influence—a system which would represent the great realities of our religion as only real when spiritually and figuratively regarded. When so regarded, we are told, they are intensely real: but we are not for a moment to suppose that they have an independent, objective, outward existence. It is so with the tempter of souls, for instance: the man who has maintained an earnest conflict with the evil in his own heart, and in the world, will have no difficulty in recognizing and feel-

ing that he grapples with a concentrated, and, if you will, a personal power of evil : but out of his own spiritual experience, we are not to imagine, or at all events not to trouble ourselves with, the existence of such a personal power. And so likewise with the effect of Christ's death. The sinner, accustomed to approach God by sacrifices, this is what we are told, transferred to that great event the power of propitiation which he believed to reside in the victims slain at the altar; and such view has, from his expressions, spread downward to us, carrying for our spiritual needs a reality likewise : but as for its having been absolutely the fact, independent of all human feeling on the matter, the deep-thinking and logical Christian is not to deem so for a moment. Now in regard to all such distinctions between the inward satisfaction which our souls are to find in the thought of Christ's sacrifice, and the absolute matter of fact which was wrought as this day on the cross, let us at once say, that we know not, and recognize not, any of them. If any portion of our Christian belief can be shewn to be merely thus the result of feeling of need, and of our own imagination, I would say, let us sacrifice it, and let us cleave, not to our own imaginations, but to the truth of God. But it is not so. The religion which we believe, is founded, not on imaginations, nor on our own feeling of necessity, but on facts which have happened, and which

are independent of ourselves and our feelings. If it were not so, I see not how we could escape the inference, that the falseness of a religion does not in any way hinder its efficacy. These persons, for example, tell me that I am perfectly right in believing Christ's death to have been a sacrifice for sin, because I feel that such a sacrifice is needed for my sin: but they deny that Christ's death was really such a sacrifice. Why then I am living before God, according to them, on the strength of a false deeming: and I cannot see that it makes any difference, whether that false deeming be that Christ died for me, or that Mahomet was my prophet, or that any fable of false religions happened. It was, I believe, reserved for the unbelief of our days, to devise so shrewd, and at the same time so fallacious an escape, by which to reconcile the semblance of holding Christianity with the reality of rejecting it. Now as against any such view, I suppose I need not hardly remind you, that there is such a thing as God's truth: and that whatever is a portion of that truth, exists and subsists, independently of all human deeming and opinion whatsoever. And a step further; that it is by apprehending and realizing and assimilating this truth of God, that every human soul must be renewed and saved, not by any deeming or imagination of its own. Well then, to apply this to the matter in hand. You and I believe that Christ's death was the sacrifice and pro-

pitiation for our sins. On this faith we live: by this faith we are renewed in righteousness. It is good for us so to believe, and we find it good for us. But why? Those persons to whom I have alluded say, because there are certain deep needs in our nature which make such a belief necessary to us, and give it a truth for us: and there they stop. I acknowledge the deep needs: I find all the necessity for us of the belief, and I rejoice to know that it is for you and me the truth, the truth of life, the greatest of all truths: but here I do not stop: when the question is asked of me, why? I answer, just because it really was so; because that sacrifice for sin is a portion of God's truth and fact, made real to my soul by faith. Unless it were, all my belief in it, all my feeling of its necessity, all my deep need, would never make it to be to me the reliable assurance of real pardon, or any more than a bare semblance in a dream: could never alter as it does now alter, my state before God.

Let us then at once occupy ourselves with this position: the death of Christ was a real sacrifice for the sins of the world, not an event to which the idea of sacrifice has been attached by association, or owing to the yearnings of human need. It is plain that such a position should be first maintained, as against the unbeliever, on the simplest external grounds of matter of fact. We will first then take the cir-

cumstances of that death, as related to us in Scripture. It occurred in the midst of the principal feast of the Jewish law, of that one most strongly marked with expiatory meaning. In that feast, the Passover, the destroying angel passed over those houses on which the blood of the sacrificed lamb was sprinkled. But, it may be said, are we not assuming without reason, a connexion between the death of Christ and the passover? Is it not the very height of fallacious reasoning, to argue that there need have been any connexion in meaning between a religious celebration, and a public execution which happened during its season? Do not other circumstances, the concourse of the people, the presence of the Roman governor, amply account for that event taking place at that time? All this might perhaps be so: but I find that the two are inseparably connected together by the sacred historians themselves, and by the assertion of an Apostle after the event. At Christ's death, the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom. Are we expected to have strength enough of credulity to believe that this was a merely fortuitous occurrence? And if the earthquake, and the rending of the rocks, and the opening of the graves, were signs accompanying that death of his, is that rending of the temple veil alone to remain without meaning, just because that meaning would be an inconvenient one for the opponents? Well then,

I ask, what was that veil? It was the fence which shut the people out, and even the priests themselves, from the immediate presence of the glory of the Lord over the mercy-seat: yes, and even the high priest himself, except once only in the year, the great day of atonement, when he might not enter there till first expiation had been made for sin by the shedding of blood; and then he himself, and the sacred vessels, and the mercy-seat, were sprinkled with the blood of atonement. Such was this veil: and if the rending of it at Christ's death signified any thing, what could that signification be, but that the way to the divine presence, which before was shut to all but the representative of God's people when specially prepared by atoning sacrifice, was now laid open to all? And can any reasonable man connect such a token as this with the simultaneous shedding of the blood of Jesus on the cross, with all that is said of the effect of his death as to giving us access to God, and not infer that as, once in the year, access was gained for the high priest only by sacrifice and blood-shedding in atonement for sin, so now once for all access was gained for all by that one great sacrifice and blood-shedding in atonement for all men's sin? I ask any man in possession of his faculties, and of fair judgment to use them, to lay such facts as these beside such words as the following—"Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:" or such as these again—"Having

then, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," and then to say, whether he who asserts or he who denies the atonement, is the unreasonable person ?

And observe where this leads us. It leads us to the conclusion that what was thus accomplished by Christ's death, was not some other kind of effect, which a pious and humble man might call a sacrifice for sin if he pleased, and feel to be deeply true for him and his wants,—but that it was an absolute fact in God's world, as much a fact as that rending which testified to it, that sin was put away by the shedding once for all of that blood of the Lord Jesus : that henceforth all sinners would have access into the holiest place of God's presence and favour, not by virtue, in the first place, of their thinking and feeling and deeming this or that, but by virtue in the first place of the blood of the Lamb, by which their sin has been atoned for in God's sight : and by the actual means on their part of their accepting, realizing, putting on, that atonement, sprinkling on them, by faith, of that blood thus shed, thus efficacious, thus propitiatory for their sins and the sin of the whole world.

Now it is obvious that as yet we have been taking the very lowest ground, and purposely so. We have been merely connecting the death of Christ with a historical fact which was simultaneous with it, and asking the candid hearer to exercise his judgment as to the connexion of the

two. But when we come, from merely assuming matters of fact detailed in Scripture, and judging upon them, to the dogmatic testimony of the same Scripture on Christ's death as an atonement, we rest on ground the security of which it would be impossible to suppose open to question, had not that question been raised. Nothing can be plainer than the words of Scripture on this matter. St. Paul writes, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell: and having made peace by the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself;" and again, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." St. Peter, "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree:" St. John, as in our text, "He is a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." Nor is it merely in sayings uttered after the event, or in doctrinal teaching which grew out of it, that we find the idea prevalent: our Lord's own sayings respecting himself testify to it no less plainly: else, what words are these, spoken at the most solemn time of his life, and in the institution of a perpetual memorial of that his death—"This is the cup of the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins?" What again are these, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many?" What again would

be the significance of such words as these, on any other supposition than that of the propitiatory death of Christ—"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends?" Or these, "The good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep?" In what sense could Christ be said to lay down his life for us, if it were not in this, which we have been maintaining? Let us grant, that his death is to us the highest of all examples of love: is this an end which will warrant the expressions which we have been quoting from Scripture respecting it? How can a high example of love be said in any sense to be a propitiation for sin? How, to have made peace between man and God? It is obvious, that to justify such expressions, very much more must have been effected by that death than merely the setting such an example.

Now, having spoken of the circumstances connected with Christ's death itself, and of the terms in which it is treated in Scripture,—and having I think shewn you, that both these lines of evidence point to a propitiatory sacrifice, let us dwell awhile on the nature of the case itself: not in order to judge *a priori* what should have been the nature of his death, an enquiry to which we are manifestly unequal, but that we may shew the fitness of such a propitiation once revealed to us with regard to the end to be effected. That end was a double one: it had

respect to God; it had respect also to the sinner. First, it had respect to God. Now when we say this, we necessarily mean, respect to God as regards his manifestation of himself to us. More than this we know not of him. And his character as manifested to us is, as a God of infinite truth, holiness, and justice: as a God who will not and cannot condone or enter into compromise with sin: who will by no means clear the guilty. And in the same great manifestation of facts which Scripture gives us, we see man and man's world, standing over against this just and holy God, sunk in sin and burdened with its guilt. I suppose there is no denying that these two sides of the picture are truly drawn. Now it is not perhaps for us to ask how may reconciliation be effected between these two? Such a question might indeed be not wholly unprofitable, in suggesting to us many an answer pointing at ways in which such reconciliation could not be effected: but let us at present pass by these, and let us rather judge of God's own way of effecting it, by God's own previous intimation on the subject. From the time of the fall, man was thus sinful. From the time of the fall, man had access to God. How? Because that access must in some way have pointed at, signified, prefigured, the way in which access was really and once for all to be gained, if it had any meaning at all, and if that final access was to

be gained at all. Let me put the same in perhaps plainer words. If we find God, all through the Old Testament dispensation, prescribing a certain mode of access to Him for guilty men, and if God intended ever to provide a great and final mode of access to himself for men, seeing that He is unchangeable, and that our case remains the same, it is of necessity to suppose that in that way of access thus prescribed by him, he should have adumbrated or in some way pointed to the real and final method which he had chosen. Now that prescribed way was the way of sacrifice. In the patriarchal line, and under the Levitical law, we find it directed and enjoined by God himself: in almost every heathen nation of the old world, we discover traces more or less distinct, of their having inherited from primitive ages the same idea and practice. This connexion of remission of sin with the death and shedding of blood of a victim, is not an idea of man's invention. It has no material in the unassisted human mind out of which it may be built up. And no student of Scripture will have the slightest difficulty in inferring, from the many directions and injunctions concerning it given by God himself, that it was from his command that the practice was first derived. Now, in pursuance of my argument, I want you to observe what it is that God brings about, when the Saviour is to provide this final access

to himself for all mankind. He sends not a teacher, not a guide, but one who suffers, and dies, and sheds his blood: one who speaks of himself as a sacrifice for sin: one who by his Spirit inspires his Apostles to dwell on his death as being this sacrifice, and having accomplished this final access to God. How can we understand all this, unless by attributing to God the same design throughout, viz. to make Him absolutely and in the very truth, that one sacrifice; and to shew us that in this manner it is his pleasure that sin should be atoned for and removed away? And this the more, when we reflect on all that is said of Christ in other respects; how He was pleased to take upon him this our nature, that in him this our nature might be once for all stricken and made sacrifice for sin; how we have such expressions as this, that God “laid upon him the iniquities of us all;” that “He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin?” How can we but believe, that the same God, who had from the earliest days pointed out sacrifice as the way of access to him, now by one great sacrifice, striking down and offering one who bore in his own person the race that had sinned, for ever opened for that race full and free access to himself, thus being just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus? And these last words lead us to our final consideration: the suitable-

ness of this sacrifice for the sinner himself. We have seen, if we have noted the history of the world, the failure of all attempts on the part of man to build up himself in righteousness. No philosophy could ever do it; no social or moral improvement ever reached or approached it. As long as guilt presses on the conscience, there can be no real advance in holiness. But when that guilt is removed—when I can enter by faith into the accomplished work of the death of Christ, and by union with him put on his righteousness as mine own, this being no idle fancy, but a realization of the truth of God respecting me, then my moral freedom is gained; then I have boldness of resolve and scope of action before and towards God: I have indeed no liberty to sin, because that very death, into the reality of which my faith has caused me to enter, is a death unto sin: but I have liberty for righteousness, because that same Lord who was delivered to death on account of my sins, was raised again on account of my justification, and standing in his righteousness and in the power of his Spirit, I am able to please God, and become like unto Him, purifying myself even as He is pure.

Such, beloved, are some of the thoughts which crowd up around the great event of this day, as connected with the unbelief and the insufficient deemings of the time in which we

live. It is sometimes necessary that we should enter, as we have now done, upon the defence of even the fundamental truths of our Christian faith. May such defence, now and at all times, have the effect of so assuring them to us, that our reliance on them may never be shaken.

SERMON XIII.

EASTER DAY.

1857.

COL. iii. 4.

“Christ, who is our Life.”

THE great event of this day has ever been regarded as the crowning proof of our Redemption being accomplished. “If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins.” And yet, viewed in a certain light, Christ’s resurrection was but a matter of course, following naturally and necessarily upon a higher and still more glorious truth. Thus St. Peter in his first discourse to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, taking up the strain of which I have spoken, says, “Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains (or bands) of death: because it was impossible that he should be holden of it.” And again in his second discourse, he tells them, “Ye killed the Prince (or Author) of life, whom God hath raised from the dead.”

And the Lord himself makes his Resurrection to be a mere consequence of something far greater than itself when he says, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." Now it is this view which I purpose taking of our Lord this morning; as the Prince and Author of life; he that has power over life, so that it is impossible that he should be holden of death. This character of his will naturally find its noblest illustration in the great event of this day: and having thus illustrated it, we will proceed to deduce from it certain inferences as regards ourselves and our own standing on earth.

Christ then is the Lord of Life. And here let me recall to your attention our line of argument in the opening sermons in our course on Divine Love in Creation and Redemption. We there maintained, that all this visible and invisible creation, the whole universe of matter and spirit, is but a portion of the manifestation of God by his only begotten Son: that, in fact, Creation is only part of Redemption. We endeavoured to substantiate this, as against the usual but shallow and unworthy view of these things, that God intended creation to be the manifestation of his glory and perfect tribute to his praise, but that sin by some terrible accident came in and spoilt all; and that in consequence, the Son of God devised and carried out the scheme of Re-

demption, whereby this ruin of God's universe might be rendered in some sort serviceable again to its Maker. This is the common view of the matter; making Redemption merely a salvage out of the wreck of Creation, and a very poor and scanty salvage too. Now as directly opposed to this, the received teaching of our day, even from evangelical pulpits, we maintained, and I believe we shewed it out of Scripture to be God's truth, that Redemption was the purpose of Creation: that all the universe, and all that lives and breathes, and all that lives and vegetates, and all that merely exists without organized life, in a word all that is, and is the object of our thought, were created by and for the Son of God, and expressly to subserve his great purpose of Redemption. All was created by Him, as the expression of the Father's will, the utterer of his purpose; by Him as having power of life in himself; power to call forth from nothing the vast foundations of the world, and then to rear on them the plant, and the animal, and the living spirit of man inhabiting an animal body. These He created, and these he sustains, and ever did sustain, by the word of his power; and not only this, but they were made *for* Him: every one He devised and ordained, and shaped, and placed where it is, just and merely to be subservient to his great work of Redemption: to that pre-ordained death and triumph of his of which it is written that the

Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world; that the kingdom has been prepared for the blessed of the Father from before the foundation of the world. All this I do not here stay again to prove: I endeavoured then to prove it: and if you refer to the three first sermons of that course in the published volume, you will see what was said with that view. I merely recite it here, as necessary to that which I have now in hand.

Now in all this creative process, when the world, the ages of time, the reaches of space, the almost innumerable ranks of vegetable and animal and spiritual existence were called into being by and for the Son of God, what one great character, what one ruling idea and power, what one permeating and all-present agency, may we attribute to him in this work of his? By what virtue did he work it—and again for what purpose? All things were made *for* Him—which I have twice explained, to subserve his great purpose of Redemption: but go further still—ask, why that purpose of Redemption? Why this new-created spiritual world of purity and holiness and love, the joy and crown and flower and jewel of all his glorious works? May not both these questions be answered in this simple and short word—he is the LORD of LIFE? First, by this power he made the world. Life resides in, flows out and springs forth from him. “As the Father hath life

in himself, so also hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." His very thought is life. In his almighty mind rose to his bidding the idea of light: and behold there was light. He shaped in thought the almost living form of the floating mist, and the running stream, and the plunging wave: and lo they were already gathering around him, and uttering his praise. And the living tribes of creation crowded not faster through his all-containing thought, than they appeared in their life and their joy on the face of the earth, moving and feeding at his will. Nor was this life-generating power confined to the organization and vivification of matter. In loftier realms, the power was the same; the agency as continuous and immediate. The living spirits of man and angels followed as surely and as quickly his creative fiat. In him was life. He was, and is, and ever will be, its central source, its fountain head where it wells up clear, and whence it flows forth in infinite abundance over all this unlimited universe. This was his agency, this his power in creation: but this was his purpose also. All things were created by Him, because he is life: and all things were created for Him also, because he is life. It is his intent, his purpose, his joy, to originate, to implant, to perfect, life. Death is alien from him; vacuity and nothingness bring him no joy. It is in life that he rejoices. And this is true of all the various meanings of that word: in

every grade of life, lived and carried out according to his purpose in creation, we may believe that he in some sense sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied: the upholding all living things by the word of his power, is to him that wherein he delights—no small triumph of his exaltation to be a Prince and a Saviour, no small portion of that divine satisfaction, with which he regards the works of his hands. “Without Him was not any thing made that hath been made.” The most delicate arrangement of colour on the plant, the most exquisite adaptation of the faculties of life in the animal, all are his: and if his, then the carrying out of his purposes: purposes no less truly described in this their lower accomplishment, than in their higher, by his own words, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it abundantly.” But when we leave these lower realms, and rise to those higher, we require no speculative consideration any longer to convince us that it is his intent, and his joy, to produce, to continue, to perfect, life. He himself has shewn us this, by all that he has done in our nature. Man had involved himself in sin; and what is sin, but death? Death had crept in, and corrupted the vital powers of man. These vital powers are manifold and marvellous: not bounded by time, but extending into eternity: reaching upwards even towards likeness to and nearness to God himself. And in the expansion

and highest exercise of these vital powers, consisted all the felicity of man. Eternal life is the term used to express to us that felicity. And as in other terms, so in this, we are apt when we use them to lose sight of their meaning; and to forget that the term eternal life, to which we attach so blessed a meaning, is after all but the infinite extension and exaltation of those powers and enjoyments of which life itself consists. We are apt to imagine it some totally different state, consisting of elements of which we here know nothing. Now this eternal life was imperilled, nay was shut out from us, by our sin. Death reigned: and it seemed as if death was to triumph over man. But it was not so. Blind chance was not to obtain the victory in God's world, nor was man for a moment lost sight of by his Creator and Redeemer. All this peril, all this exclusion, was but the preparation of his way of manifesting himself as our Life. In order to teach his creature to cast down self and to exalt him, to shun the death of the spirit, which is selfishness, and to seek the life of the spirit, which is love, love to Him and to man, he has been pleased to bring us into conflict with sin and under the shadow of death; he has been pleased to permit all that of which Redemption has been the solution, as it is the cure. Now that better life of our spirit, which is in fact our only real and highest life, it was his will and purpose to bestow upon us

in and by means of this conflict. And now comes in the most wonderful fact of that which we have to say of him as our Life. In bringing about the lower kinds of life, He spake and it was: even the animal life of man, and the existence of his spirit, are owing to the same almighty fiat of which we have already spoken. But when the Lord Jesus would bring those spirits up out of death unto life glorious and immortal, it was by no spoken word, by no absolute decree, that he accomplished the end. No, for He was working in a different world, and one which he had subjected to different laws. In that spirit of man, the will was dead, the affections were well-nigh dead also. Almighty Power could doubtless renew the will and rekindle the affections: but this was not the method in which God would proceed with the living and responsible spirit of man: those whom he had created free, he would redeem free also: there should be no compulsion, no constraint, but that of the affections drawing the man and turning his course: the new life which was to overcome death should be spontaneous, should be unfolded in him as the plant from the seed: should grow in him and take him up into itself; and thus, and thus only, transform him into a tree of righteousness to bring forth fruit to God's glory in life eternal. And how did the Lord of life choose to bring about such an end as this? The answer is so

familiar to us, that it has ceased to carry that wonder to our minds which it ought ever to bear with it. In order to plant this new life in our affections, and renew our will, and kindle our desires after God, the Son of God himself descended into the conflict which we were unable to maintain : took upon himself the nature and likeness of sinful man : bore the guilt of all our race, and became thus our stricken substitute, in our humanity,—the divine and righteous victim, in the place of us merely human and guilty victims : he, the Prince and Author of life was actually slain, put to death, that we might live. O again how hardened are we become by familiarity to assertions the most startling ! If it were not so, the words “the death of the Son of God” would by the very strangeness of their sound awaken the dumbest ear, and set the slowest intellect enquiring. More consistent thus far at least, is the so-called Unitarian, to whom those words carry a contradiction to which he refuses to yield assent : even him we might learn from : not in refusing to yield assent, but in not losing sight of the wonder, and the paradox which lies in them. The Son of God died : this Author of life of whom we have been speaking, submitted to privation of life. And that human body, which he had united to his personal Godhead, was laid cold and lifeless in the tomb, apparently to become the prey of corruption and to yield to decay, as

ours shall yield to decay when life has left them. And thus he, and that race which he had taken upon him, lay under the cold hand of death. It was his own will that it should be so. Death was the penalty of sin : and that penalty he had undergone. And now, in asking ourselves what shall follow, let us revert to the end of Redemption as the accomplishment of all his creative work, of which we have been saying so much to-day. It was not merely to clear us from guilt that the Son of God had entered into this conflict,—had himself grappled with death, and with him who had the power of death. No ; it was to bestow on us life ; to raise us up again in new power of life unto God—in life eternal. It was impossible, from his own glorious being as Lord of Life, that He personally should be holden of death : it was as much impossible from the nature of the work which He, the almighty one, had undertaken for us, that he should permit that humanity of ours which he bore on him to be holden by it. And thus the great event of this day, so glorious and so astonishing in itself, simply followed on other and far greater facts than itself : it could not but be, for he was life in himself ; it could not but be, for he came down upon earth to be our life : it could not but be, for he at least could not be thwarted nor frustrated in his great purpose : it might never be said of him, he begun, but he could not bring to an end.

And so, beloved, the Lord who went down into death stricken, suffering, put to shame, rose up out of death victorious, and full of triumph and glory. The tomb could not hold him: the watch could not prevent him: the ignorance and despair of his own could not daunt him: at the appointed moment, the mighty power of Life, the commandment which he had received of the Father, wrought in him: no voice from without called him to come forth, but the spark of life rekindled spontaneous within. In secret was the mighty act accomplished: none saw when he arose: for the earthquake and the rolling away of the stone and the watching angels, seem to have been all in testimony, not in accomplishment, of the resurrection. Those secret springs of life were perhaps too sacred for created eye to behold: and that first birth of the Resurrection life had none for witness save Him, whose glory it is to conceal a matter. "He is not here but risen. Come, see the place where the Lord lay:" these are the first greetings of the most joyous morn which the world had ever seen. And then, after a few of these rays of scattered light, the Lord himself appeared, as the Sun in his strength, before the eyes of his comforted ones; and from that hour onward, joy rose upon their hearts, and holy gladness was shed over the toils and conflicts of their lives: and not creation, not the day's event, but that resurrection, was ever the first fact in their thoughts and in

their words: to this they were witnesses; all other deliverances were vain, if this had not been accomplished: and when the Lord, after proving to them his resurrection during forty days, was taken from them into heaven, we do not find them dwelling principally on his Ascension, but still his Resurrection is ever first in their thoughts and words. Now where they stood, there we stand, looking back on this great world's fact and triumph: thinking of it, speaking of it, feeling with regard to it, as the one event, the one deliverance, the sound to make all happy: to wipe away the tears of the past, to calm the anxieties of the present, to light up the dim uncertain future with assurance of joy. And why is this? why ought this to be? for it is no weakness thus to feel and be assured, but our best and firmest strength: no fault, but a blessed and sacred duty. Ask me why it is; what we mean by this service and commemoration; why our saddened strains of Lenten music suddenly burst into liveliest notes of praise; why the thought of Easter stirs every heart with joy: and the answer is ready,—Christ, who is our life, has arisen. He who gave us life; He who purchased for us life; He who himself is our life. In that re-vivified form, we see the pledge that death shall not reign over us, any more than it reigned over him: because He lives, we shall live also. But of what am I speaking, in the fulness of these

words of joy and hope? Is it of any physical necessity, so that that nature which he bore upon him is at once renovated into its highest life, as matter of fact; as if some inner spring of its collective being were touched, and it awoke from the sleep of sin and death into life and immortality and joy? Ah, brethren, remember what has been already said. That life of the spirit of man is not like the life of his animal body, dependent on external impulse, and following the rigid coercion of physical law. It is, as we have already reminded you, a spontaneous individual life; kindled by God's Spirit working on the affections, drawn onward by the persuasion of the will, helped forward from step to step by blessed agency sought and found from above; dependent each moment on conscious union with this holy One of God, who is its life in life. So then when we look on the resurrection of the Lord, and see in it life for all, we see also that in which our own share is, not without God, but by God's offered help and grace, our own matter: just a case of will we or will we not: of which He himself who is our life said of the one side, "Ye have no will to come to me, that ye might have life:" and of the other, "Whosoever looketh on the Son and believeth in him, hath everlasting life." Behold then, beloved, the Son of God delivered for your offences, and raised again for your justification. Look upon Him, as the Israelite on

the serpent which Moses lifted in the wilderness, and live. Live, not with that mere general gift of immortality with which He by rising in our nature has endowed it all: but with that blessed and special gift of spiritual and bodily life in purity and holiness and joy, which those who are united to Him have even here, and shall have in its perfection hereafter. Contemplate during this season, His resurrection state; deduce its evidences and its details from the Scripture: and then bring in those words, CHRIST OUR LIFE. That life of his is yours, as many of you as are living by faith and in the obedience of faith in him. It is not the life of the selfish and the worldly: not the life of the votaries of pleasure and of fashion: not the life of you, who care for nothing but how large a name you may make for yourselves in the world, how much men think of you, how good a table you keep, and how gay an equipage you drive: you have a name to live, and are dead: stand ye aloof from this matter of to-day's triumph and joy, for it is none of yours: or else begin to be honest and sensible men; open your eyes to your guilt and need; cast away your vanities, come in humility to Christ's cross for pardon, to Christ's tomb for death unto sin: and then, and not till then, you will have taken up your right to rejoice in his resurrection. O may God grant, my beloved, that more and more of us may be ever finding Christ, in the most

blessed and glorious sense, to be our life ! For this is our one want—LIFE. Time rolls on, strength decays, eternity draws nearer ; the eye pales, and the arm trembles, and the foot grows unsteady, and the fountain of life is ebbing away : we want a life which shall not fail. We want Him, who grappled with death, and put off corruption, and rose glorious from the grave, to live and move and work onward in each one of us ; so that there may be in us an inward man to put on strength as the outward man decays : so that even death may be to us life ; and the grave, only the shadowed gateway of God's city of light : that when Christ who is our Life shall appear, we also may appear with Him in glory.

SERMON XIV.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

1857.

JOHN x. 11.

“I am THE GOOD SHEPHERD.”

WE have seen Jesus, who was subjected to the suffering of death in pursuance of his purpose in Redemption, raised gloriously from the dead, and taken up to God's right hand in heaven. We have accompanied Him, through deepest humiliation and keenest suffering, to the height of his well-earned triumph. And here, according to all human analogy, our consideration of him would cease. When the poet or writer of fiction has brought his hero to the height of success, his work is done. Further, he does not expect his readers to accompany him. Struggle and conflict are exciting: but the even tenor of successful repose is monotonous and dull. And not in fiction only, but in real life also, to have succeeded, is ordinarily enough. There is

that in success, which if it does not ultimately satisfy, at least for the time satiates the man. Most persons are content to prosper for prosperity's sake. More prosperity, more influence, more of the same pleasing material for self-flattery, many indeed are ever desiring, and ever grasping: but few men, it seems to me, seek for and employ success as a means to an end better than that success itself. Their success is their best moment; and from it, they decline. But the man Christ Jesus, how was this with him? Victory more glorious, triumph more complete, than his, it is impossible to conceive. How did he use it? We know, that he did not count his previous equality with God a thing to be eagerly grasped, or make it matter of self-enrichment: how was this with his resumption of that glory, yea of that glory brightened and intensified? If the crown of the universe carried no self-congratulation, what, when it glittered with the gem of Redemption, brighter than all that were there before? If we pursue this question to a reply, we shall find it as wonderful as that other was. He put aside his previous glory in order to suffer and die: he won his present triumph in order to tend and lead, and shepherd, his poor and wandering flock below. "I am the good shepherd," are words which do not apply to the days of his humiliation, but to the days of his glory. And the Church has done well to choose them for her gospel during this

season, when we have done for the present meditating more immediately on his sufferings, and are looking on him risen and exalted.

This then was the purpose of Christ's exaltation : this the result of his success. He is exalted to be a leader and a Saviour. As such, we will consider him to-day. And in examining the similitude contained in the words "I am the good shepherd," it will not be necessary that I should dwell on circumstances, or explain allusions, which must be more or less familiar to you all. The position, the duties, the affections implied in the word shepherd, we have long been in the habit of appropriating to our blessed Lord : and we do not want to be told, that he is, and does to his people, the chief of what is there implied. But it seems to me, what we do want in this as well as in other matters relating to our faith, is this ; to have these general truths, from the application of which, couched as they are in wide and abstract terms, we are ever apt to slip away, brought home to our daily cares and common lives ; and to be shewn where and how they practically press upon us as we move about and hold converse in our ordinary work. Let us then strive to knit up this link in our minds between our triumphant and exalted Saviour, and the common-place matters of the every-day world, as far as regards this his office of the good shepherd.

First of all then, let us take the widest possible range. The vast family in heaven and earth, all created being, is under his guidance as the risen and exalted Redeemer. Not only has he created all things, not only does he uphold all things by the word of his power, but by virtue of Redemption, he exercises a peculiar and special government over all things. However little we may be able to enter into the detailed meaning of such a closer relationship being established by Redemption, of the fact itself there can be no doubt. Scripture directly asserts it again and again. After our Lord had risen, in words to which I shall have again to call your attention by and by, he says, "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth." And St. Paul, speaking of the purposed end of all that Christ did and suffered, says, "To this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living." And again he writes that the Father, having made peace by the blood of the cross, by Christ reconciled to himself all things which are in heaven and earth. So that there can be no doubt, in the mind of the thoughtful Christian, that the relation to God through Christ, and if so the relation to Christ himself, of the whole universe, has been changed by the great events of our Redemption: that our blessed Lord has become in a closer sense than before, the guide and overseer and shepherd of the vast

and innumerable flock of created beings, since he was born at Bethlehem, since he was crucified on Calvary, since he rose triumphant over death and hell, and was received up into glory. But if now we narrow our view from those vast reaches of space which lie beyond our utmost comprehension, to this world of ours in which we live and move, we can have no doubt here, that by virtue of Christ's work in Redemption, he has taken into and upon himself the government and guidance of this world in a close and peculiar sense; and that this truth can never be sufficiently borne in mind by Christian men. We are all indeed aware, that there is and has been in history an ignorant and fanatical application of this great truth: but this has just been because it was not understood in its fulness and universality. Men called themselves the people of Christ, and their own clique the church of Christ, and their own sway, the government of Christ: and so, whether by setting up vicegerents of Christ on earth, or by fancied spiritual connexion with Christ in heaven, they in fact robbed Christ of his rights in that world which is all his, one as well as another, one church and one people as well as another. He rules and orders and arranges the process of things here below, in accordance with the will of the Father, with which he is in perfect and unbroken union. Each people on earth has its place appointed, and the bounds of its habitation,

and the course of its progress, and the extent of its influence: and according to every advantage given, will He require work for him and with him: and such work when done, or in as far as it is done, is of Him and for his purposes. Man proposes, God disposes—this we all acknowledge: but the Christian acknowledges it in a peculiar sense—not as merely asserting that the will of the governor of heaven and earth is supreme, but as claiming for his own Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, the lordship and rule over the chances and changes of human affairs, and the ordering of the unruly wills and affections of sinful men to the furtherance of his own high and glorious purposes.

We have then advanced thus far: but it is plain that so far from exhausting, we have not even yet approached the full and proper meaning of the term shepherd, and the office thus designated. Christ rules and orders the universe, and thus he may be said to be its shepherd: he governs and arranges the nations and events of this world, and so far he may be said to be its shepherd: but all the inner recesses, so to speak, of the meaning of that word, do not seem to be reached by either of these. It is true, that both of these might be so pressed as to seem to include some of them. For instance, all the care of a gracious Providence for the weak, all the provision for the hungry, all that merciful consideration which tempers affliction generally to

the sons of men, which stays the rough wind in the day of the east wind, these may be properly said to belong to his fond pastoral care: his tender mercies are over all his works. But we have not yet approached the meaning of these words, "I know mine own, and am known of mine:" nor of those others—"Lovest thou me? then feed my sheep:" nor of these, "Take heed to yourselves, that ye feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." So that we are now brought to a sense even closer than any of these, in which our risen and ascended Saviour is the good shepherd: in which all the tenderness of that character, all the individual nearness, all the constant personal vigilance felt and leaned on, may be filled up and realized. And such a sense is plainly before us in Scripture and in common life. If we ask, to whom does it belong? Scripture tells us of those who hear his voice and follow him: of those who see the Son and believe on him, of those who listen to him and obey him: and common life yields an answer likewise, and marks off, though not with an infallible line of demarcation, a body of men who receive and honour Christ in daily life, as distinguished from those who do not receive nor honour him. I say the line of demarcation as drawn by man is not an infallible one. It is most true. Man has drawn it closer and closer and closer, but has ever been convicted of mistake in his

estimate. First there is the wide circle of the visible professing church of the baptized, regarding which all will confess that the tares in it are very abundantly mingled with the wheat; next, there is the narrower circle of what are called strictly religious people, careful in doctrine, accurate in outward practice, using certain terms which appear to designate men in earnest and men persuaded of and living up to, saving truths. And as regards this second and smaller enclosure, it is wonderful that men's eyes are not opened, after the many lamentable examples which we have seen, to the fact that it is as little to be depended on as the other: that a man's being what is called a serious man, and using evangelical phrases, is not one whit more guarantee for his being one of the Lord's people, than his being a baptized man, or than his being a man at all. Then there is again that line drawn narrower still, which includes a few chosen and tried ones, whom we think we may hold up to ourselves as patterns and very certain examples of that of which we are in search. But here again, man's estimate may fail, and has often failed: and the blank dismay of many a family whose head has been reputed such an one, and then suddenly found worthless, may testify, how much reliance may be placed in human deeming, where the seeing of the heart is concerned. Whole churches have been deceived: the elect, in man's estimation, have proved men of treachery and lust and

blood : close communions have become by-words for fraud and hypocrisy : and in the seat of the pretended vicar of Christ on earth, have sat murderers and adulterers. And why do I allege these things ? How does it belong to my subject, to descant on the imperfection of human judgment in marking out the elect of the Lord over whom he is in the most especial sense, the good shepherd ? For this reason, brethren, and in this manner : that nothing is commoner with the world than to allege this very imperfection as a proof that there are no such people of the Lord at all : to bring forward every lamentable instance of frailty in the profession of religion, as shewing that all religion is worthless, and the facts on which it is based, unreal. To these shallow reasoners, we answer, it is not so : you know well, that the corruption of the best is ever the worst : you do not thus judge in other things ; for example the assumption by a villain of the simplicity and innocence of youth does not shew that that simplicity and innocence are not real and are not good, but that they *are* ; in fact, proves their reality, not their unreality ; and so it is here too. The sanctity which the hypocrite puts on is in itself a thing genuine, a thing whose power is acknowledged, or he would not need so to use it, and would not, so using it, succeed in his object. The Lord himself testifies to the existence of his people, and common life testifies to it likewise : testifies as I said not infallibly, but still with a voice which none can fail to hear,

and which none do fail to act upon. Scorn, coldness, neglect, ridicule, persecution, all these are tributes to the reality of that life of God which God's people lead in the world.

On the other hand, the good fruits of their labours of love, far, alas, too few, but still many and genuine, prove that there are among us somewhere, men in earnest, with Christ's love in their hearts constraining them. The Lord has a people among us ; not perhaps where we think we find them—more likely to be with the last than with the first ; but wherever they are, of these is the Lord Jesus, in his glory, the peculiar and personal good shepherd. He knows them, and they know Him, even as He knows the Father and the Father knows Him. These are wonderful words : but there can be no doubt that such is his own assertion : nor can there be any, that such assertion points to intimate personal knowledge, totally distinct from mere historical assent to matters of fact respecting him. Of these, who believe in him and obey him, He says that they are *his* : that the Father gave them to him : that none shall ever pluck them out of his hand.

Let us follow awhile his pastoral care of these his people, and the consequent condition of and effect in themselves.

First then, he is their *almighty* Shepherd. His goodness to them is not mere good will limited by another's power : but what He desires for them, that he has full power to bring

about. Lamb of Christ, wherever thou art, however low down in the scale of thine own wishes and his precepts, however feeble, however unworthy, thy Shepherd is able to do all for thee. Rely on Him. Cast thyself on Him. Live by Him, not by thyself. Hope in him: grasp that hope fast, and never give it up. He can, and he will. Enemy of Christ, whoever and wherever thou art, however uplifted by talent, by station, by experience, above the weakest of his little ones, think not to prevail against them: they shall triumph, thou shalt fail and be ashamed: their Redeemer is strong; their Shepherd is almighty: O be prevailed on and cast in thy lot with them, and thus and only thus it shall be well with thee after all.

Again, he is for his people an *ever-watchful* Shepherd. "He that keepeth Israel never slumbereth or sleepeth." O thou weak and timid one, who lovest thy Saviour, and longest to follow him closer and to be more like him, but through the many and unfailing attacks of the foe canst not, as thou wouldst, see his footstep nor catch his voice,—here is comfort for thee. Thy Shepherd is ever vigilant; no device of thine enemy is there, which He has not fathomed and limited, and every step and access of which he is not watching. Thou art not drifting by chance before the storm: but He is on board thy vessel, his hand is on thine helm, his ever-open eye is scanning for thee the dark and heaving waters. The sunken rocks He knows; the perilous coast

he knows; and if thou wilt but trust to him, and not take upon thee to supersede his guidance, that steering of his shall bring thee in his time to the haven where thou wouldest be.

Moreover, he is a *tender* and *compassionate* Shepherd: not one of a different race who cannot sympathize with his flock; but, in all that tries and harasses them, one of themselves. Who can tell the alienation which must ensue between him and his, if this tie were broken? Let us measure by our sense of the consequence of its defect, its infinite value now. We can go to him for every thing. In converse with him in prayer, and in our secret thoughts, there is no infirmity, no shortcoming, no sin, which we ever need be afraid to utter to him: He has borne them all: he knows their weight, and has himself sunk under it. If shame burn in our cheeks, O what shame can be equal to his, when he, the Lord of glory, hung, stripped and pierced and soiled, the sport of his enemies? If pain rack our frames, his surpassed it all: if dread apprehension of the future shoot its pangs across us, we know one who when his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death, prayed and said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me." He is indeed a Shepherd fitted for a weak and afflicted and struggling flock; to encourage the timid, to support the falling, to aid the helpless, to fold to his heart the scouted, the anathematized, the

forlorn, the desperate; to give rest to all the weary and heavy laden. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

Then once more, He is an *all-wise* Shepherd. The past, the present, the future, all lie open to him. What is best for his flock, He only knows, and he knows entirely. In no respect is the comparison more appropriate than in this. We are ever like sheep going astray: wandering each to his own way. Many spots seem to us pleasant to feed in, which are full of unseen danger. Many pastures taste to us fresh and sweet, which are rank with deadly poison. When the wolf comes in sheep's clothing, we recognize him not. We want one to determine our course and to choose for us: one to advise us of approaching peril and point out to us a way of escape. And such an one is our good shepherd. He can tell, which way will lead us right, and he will prevent us from having our own way to our destruction, if we lean upon and follow him. Sometimes indeed he may permit us for awhile to stray; may let us make trial of that which our hearts thirsted for; and failure and shame may be the immediate consequence: but it is to teach us a lesson of reliance on him: to shew us by our own experience, that if he be indeed our Shepherd we

cannot want, however nature may sometimes rebel against his present guidance.

Lie still then, little flock, assured by his almightiness, guarded by his watchfulness, rooted in his sympathy, and safe in his unerring wisdom. Seek no other shepherd, for He is all-sufficient. Question him not, nor distrust him. Every hour of common life, He sustains, he watches, he pities, he guides you. Nothing which you feel a desire or fear to do, is too small for his notice: nothing too great for his power. However unpromising life may seem, He will bring out of it blessing and joy: however obscure and devious your course may be, He will shine upon it with light in the end: for thus saith the Lord God, "Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh his sheep in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the dark and cloudy day." Yea, beloved, He will in the end refresh our souls: he will make us lie down in green pastures, and lead us forth beside the waters of comfort.

And now I might conclude by saying a few words to those who know not and care not for this good shepherd: who are contented to be guided by the world's customs and their own sense of their own interest; to walk in the light of their own eyes and the hearing of their own

ears. But I must leave so solemn a matter as pleading with them for their souls' life, to a time when I can make it the chief subject and burden of a sermon: if by any means I may persuade some of them to forsake the vain leader they have chosen, and to take this good Shepherd for their guide. Till then I must leave with them what has been said to-day, and end with one general consideration, appropriate to our announced object this morning.

Christ is the CHIEF Shepherd. It is his will, that under Him there should be others, not almighty like Him, not, alas, watchful nor compassionate as He is, not gifted with infinite wisdom, but weak and remiss and erring men, still his under-shepherds in the leading and feeding of his flock. The first whom He ever thus commissioned, was one who had denied him thrice: and his shepherds ever since have been not less fallible than he was. But He ordains that such there should be; and when he uttered those words, "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth," he added, Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Moreover, he appointed that they should take heed for his flock and provide under-shepherds again to themselves, so that no part of his church may be without guidance and pasture. And it is his saying, that the workman is worthy of his hire: his Apostle's, that they who minister to the Gospel should live of the Gospel. Now it is

for an important class of these under-shepherds that I ask your contribution to-day, for our Scripture readers, who subserve the work of the clergy in this vast accumulation of great cities which we call London. I need not explain to you their work, further than to say that it is that of pioneers and helpers to the ministers of Christ more properly so called ; and that it may be, and I have every reason to think has been made, most valuable and indeed indispensable, as such an exploration, and means of overseeing these districts, whose crowded population, and continual changes of inhabitants, outstrip any unassisted efforts of their ministers to keep them properly and pastorally in hand. I may remind you that we are responsible to the Scripture Readers' Society for the sum of 70*l.* per annum, which, for uniformity of accounts, they prefer themselves paying to our Scripture reader, we undertaking to repay it. But I am sure I may take larger ground, and as on former occasions expect from you, over and above this 70*l.*, a considerable contribution to the general fund of the Society, which needs indeed all it can obtain, and with all is wholly unable to keep pace with the vast increase of our population, or even to hold its own in already occupied districts.

May God grant that your own knowledge for yourselves of the care and power of the great Chief Shepherd, may make you deeply anxious

that others should, by these ministrations of under-shepherds, be brought to know and depend on the same. May He arouse in you an ambition, which will indeed be a glorious and worthy one, to gather, out of the poverty and misery and ignorance of these streets accessions to that one flock under the one Shepherd, which He shall one day gather to himself, and which shall feed with him for ever in the blessed pastures of his heavenly kingdom.

SERMON XV.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

1857.

JOHN vi. 48.

“I am that bread of life.”

WE are ever apt to forget the system of similitudes involved in such expressions as “eternal life.” Every one of us knows, that those words do not imply merely existence without end, for that is the portion of all men, not only of the servants of God: but what they do import, we are usually not so careful to enquire. And hence I suppose it is, that such sayings as this of our Lord pass over our ears more as matters of course, than as containing, which they really do, wonderful and deep truths, to be realized within every one of us, who would belong to and be united to Him. Let us introduce their consideration by taking a review of the circumstances under which they were spoken.

It was at that time of the spring when large

bodies of persons in Galilee left their homes, and congregated in caravans or travelling companies to go up to the passover at Jerusalem. The Lord, in his teaching and working miracles, had been resorted to by a multitude which appears to have been an aggregate of such companies. It consisted of 5000 men, besides women and children. This vast number of persons had followed him into his retirement whither he had withdrawn on the news of the execution of John the Baptist. The place was a desert one: and Jesus, we read, "having come out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things." Thus the day was spent: and now evening came on, and with it the time for the usual meal. But they had nothing to eat: and they were far from any place where food might be procured. According to St. John's account, to which we must in such a matter give the preference, as being drawn up with a direct view to the spiritual meaning of the whole, it was our Lord first who, knowing what he purposed to do, asked one of his disciples, with intent to prove him, how they were to obtain food for such a multitude. The reply, and the issue, are well known to you. A small and scanty portion was found among them; this the Lord took, and blessed, and divided (such is the simple way in which the most wonderful

things are told in God's word) among the multitude five barley cakes and two small fishes, the portion perhaps of one little lad for his day and night's need, among 5000 persons. They all ate of the bread and were filled, and had likewise of the fishes as much as they would. Nor was this the whole. The twelve, after the meal was over, gathered up the fragments that remained, that nothing might be lost : and filled each man his wallet with that which might serve for his own future sustenance also.

Now doubtless this miracle ranks among the very first and most wonderful of those wrought by our Lord : but it is not its magnitude or marvellous nature to which our attention should be mainly directed. St. John has been led, contrary to his usual practice, to relate it in minute detail, even when the three other evangelists had related it before him. And the reason why he does so is obvious to any observant reader. It is not its magnitude as a miracle, but its significance as a spiritual parable of spiritual things which induces the eagle-eyed evangelist to repeat it ; which prompts him to fill out its incidents with living touches reaching the very heart and intent of the Lord.

Let us then ask ourselves, what was this which Jesus had done ? He had miraculously supplied the wants of 5000 men : but how, and why ? First for the first of these questions. He had done it from himself : by no visible creation of

great store of food, but by distributing through his own hands that scanty portion which they possessed. Thus it became capable of supplying their wants, however far those wants might extend: thus supernatural power was given to that small store, and the 5000 departed away satisfied. Not even a token of power passed from him. It was not as when he said at Cana the word "Thy son liveth," to the father who dwelt at Capernaum. It was not as when he arose and rebuked the winds and the waves. It was not even as when he said "Draw out now," in that very analogous miracle of the water turned into wine. In all these, he spake either before or simultaneously with the change; in this case it was simply his presence, simply his blessing, which from such scanty material fed all that multitude. Let us notice his proceeding further. Not out of nothing, but out of that scanty material, does he make all this provision. It may be said that this was ever his way. He heals, but it is ordinarily by the medium of some apparent, yet inadequate instrument. He makes clay and puts upon the eyes: he touches, or he takes by the hand. Still, from the prominence given to this miracle, we are fairly justified in questioning the meaning of every circumstance related in it: and among the rest this one should not escape us, that our Lord, when the lad is mentioned who had five barley cakes and two small fishes, did not echo the saying of his disciple, "But what

are they among so many?" but took them, and made use of them for his great purpose. Now let us put these two circumstances together, and to what do they amount? The former of them leads us to this—that his own personal power, resident in himself, was the sole and simple effective cause of the miracle: the latter, that he chose to exert that power upon already existing but manifestly inadequate material as its medium.

Now bearing these two in mind, I would pass at once to the higher and deeper meaning of the whole incident before us. Let that grassy hill side with its recumbent multitudes, and that well-known figure blessing and breaking, fade out of your view, and substitute for it that same well-known figure teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. Stand there and listen. Say with your hearts, "Declare unto us the parable of the loaves and fishes," and hear what he will say unto you.

The first thing which he says is this: "You, my hearers, who have flocked to me over the lake, are come because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. You are anxious for, you are labouring for, you are working out, the bread which perishes." And you and I, my friend, standing among that multitude, feel and know that the charge is just. It is not the Jewish countenance, nor the Eastern dress, nor the dark complexion, which brings it home, but it is the craving after things tem-

poral, in which Jew and Gentile share alike. Well, when he has said this, he adds "Let not this perishing, corrupting, profitless bread be the fruit of your labour, but another and a better bread, which endures unto everlasting life." And then, when our thoughts have dwelt a while on the desirableness of such bread—when we have said, "Lord, evermore give us this bread"—when some who doubted have spoken of the manna in the wilderness, and challenged him to give us bread from heaven like that, he rises gradually into the fulness of his own meaning by those very doubts and upon those very cavils, till he declares to us, "I am the bread of life." That everlasting bread, is, Himself. He came down from heaven to be the life of the world. The bread which he will give is his flesh, which he will give for the life of the world. That is true food: not food which perishes, but food which endures for ever. And his blood, which he will pour out for the world's life, is true drink: thirst-satisfying drink, for all to drink and to be saved.

Now do you not notice here, that we have again one or two particulars reproduced in the interpretation as we found them in the miracle itself? First, it is in the Lord himself alone that this power of life dwells, and from him that it goes forth. There is no intermediate agent. He is the life of men, and it is by feeding on Himself that eternal life is both obtained and assured.

But as in the miracle, so in this which is signified by it, he is pleased to impart this nourishment of life not without visible and sensible material on which his life-giving power will be exercised. In the one case, it is the five loaves and the two fishes which represent and as it were carry the weight of so mighty a thing: in the other case, it is the visible Body and Blood of the Lord, or whatsoever he is pleased to appoint to set them forth and carry the semblance of them to us. The great truth which underlies the whole, is this: that Christ is the Bread of life; the only food of man for an eternity of vitality and blessing: that this blessing must come from no other than the Lord himself in direct and personal contact with a man's own self in his inner being: but that he is pleased, in condescension to our weakness, to make use of signs and symbols whereupon his power acts, and by means of which man apprehends that his life-giving power, and becomes partaker of it.

And now, when we are asked, "Does this miracle, does the discourse of the Lord which follows it, represent to us and point at the ordinance of the Lord's Supper?" we know what to reply. Both the miracle with its accompanying discourse, and the ordinance, point to and illustrate one great truth. The former was a testimony to that truth on the part of our Lord: the latter is a living and abiding enactment, and realization of that truth for us his people to the

end of the world : and as such it was appointed by himself, at the most solemn moment of his course here below ; at the very threshold of his most sacred sufferings for our sake. But have the two, the miracle with its discourse and the ordinance, nothing to do with one another ? Let any Christian's perception answer this question. How is it possible that two manifestations of the same central truth, so singularly like one another, having the breaking and blessing and distributing in common, two incidents to which the very same words of our Lord and concerning our Lord will apply, can be totally disconnected ? On the contrary, much and wonderful light is thrown on the mystery of the Lord's Supper by this miracle and its great attendant discourse. St. Paul's subsequent words concerning that ordinance would strike us as new and startling, were it not that this previous discourse of our Lord's has familiarized our minds with the ideas conveyed by them. And to go even further back and into deeper places : how would the Lord's own words, "Take, eat : this is my body," have startled, and even shocked the Twelve, had they not been previously led by this, and perhaps other like discourses of his, to attach to that idea a meaning devoid of a repulsive effect on them.

I think too, that if we carefully examine the testimony afforded by this incident and our Lord's interpretation, it will serve to caution

us against two opposite errors with regard to the Sacrament itself. First it shews, as plainly as can be shewn, that the ordinance is not commemorative merely. The proof of this, if we carefully join the two together, is complete: no link wanting. An actual feeding on Christ, not indeed corporeal, but spiritual, is spoken of throughout his discourse here. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his Blood, ye have no life in you." "He that eateth me, the same shall live by me:" and so in many other verses. Now pass on to the following consideration: "The Lord Jesus in the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had blessed it, he brake it and gave to them, saying, Take, eat: this is my body:" thereby identifying, as plainly as words can do it, the feeding on Him of which he had previously spoken, with that participation to which he then invited them. And when He added to this the words, "This do in remembrance of me," it must be plain that these are to be taken not as themselves interpreting, but as interpreted by those of weightier meaning which have preceded: that the remembrance is to be understood as bringing with it, and involving, not merely the recollection of an event past, or of a dear departed friend and benefactor, but the participation also in a present benefit grounded on the realizing of that past event, and the union with that

divine benefactor and source of life in an actual and present manner. The discourse of which my text is part is thus of immense value to the Christian, as assuring him of a real living and feeding upon his Saviour in that sacrament, and rescuing him from the notion of its being merely a commemoration without present living benefit. Nor is it less valuable on the other hand, in declaring just as plainly that there can be nothing in that ordinance of a corporeal or material presence of the Lord Jesus; still less any renewed sacrifice of his body and blood. For his own words here form, as against such an error, the most divine testimony imaginable. He calls himself the bread of life: he explains that bread to be his flesh, which he would give for the life of the world. And when some were offended at this and called it an hard saying, just because they took it coarsely and materially, he rejoins to them, “Doth this offend you? What then if ye should behold the Son of man ascend up where he was before?” How will you then wonder at this saying, when you shall see this very flesh withdrawn from you into heaven, so that your material sense of the words will become not only hard, but impossible? Then he adds, and remember they are the key-words which unlock all the truth of the matter, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth (i. e. giveth life), the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you

are spirit and are life." That is, as I endeavoured to explain to you on Ascension Day, 1855,—all which the Lord had said on this matter must be taken, not in that fleshly sense which ministereth nothing but offence and question, and so is utterly profitless, but in that spiritual sense, which alone belongs worthily to his words: words which are never to pass away, which were not spoken to be cavilled at, but were spoken to be received and believed and lived on in men's souls and spirits. Christ was offered once on the cross and can never be offered again: in that he died, he died unto sin once: in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Christ is ascended up where he was before. His natural body of the resurrection is in heaven, not here: and to maintain any kind of presence of that body in the elements of the communion, is in fact to lose sight of the truth of that his body, and to let in error on the vital point of his humanity. No example of the truth of this can be more striking than that of the Church of Rome, which from having long held a material presence of Christ's body in the sacramental elements, has so lost sight of the truth of his humanity—as now but lately virtually to deny his human nature altogether, by sanctioning the idea of the sinless conception of his mother.

But now from these cautions, and these various illustrations of the great subject before us,

let us draw in our thoughts and fix them on that part of the treatment of the person and office of our Lord which these words present to us : I am the Bread of Life.

LIFE—we must all have. Who loves not life ? Threaten to sever body and soul, and who will not put forth more than his utmost energy to preserve them in union ? Yes, brethren, we must have life : but it is plain that while we cling to this present life, it flies from us and withers in our grasp. Bread sustains it ; —but bread perishes, and it wastes away. Drink refreshes it, but we thirst again : more in quantity is not more in satisfaction. Then lift we our thoughts higher. These things are but parables of loftier and more lasting things. There is a life which knows no decay : a beauty which never fades : a vigour which cannot waste. The Epicurean poet sings,

“ All that’s bright must fade,
The brightest still the fleetest :
All that’s sweet was made
But to be lost when sweetest.”

Yes, we Christians know it, and we make no secret of it, but we hold it up before the world, blighted and cowering under its disappointment : and we say, no wonder—for our God has a reason in this. He has a lesson to teach his creatures by it : when the flower is snapped in the bud, when the desire of the eyes is

removed with a stroke, it is His voice that you hear—it is He that is pleading with you in the idiom of Heaven,—“Seek those things which are above.” Life is there: beauty is there: joy is there. This is but the vestibule of man’s being: all present rays of light and tracks of truth are lost and quenched against that dark barrier curtain which is fixed yonder across our path; which seems so distant and so uncertain in its gloom. But approach and lift it. You need not wait for the lapse of decades of years; you can reach it from where you stand: do but touch it with the finger of faith, it will yield, and beyond it you will see the bright river of the water of life stretching away in endless course through the city of God. “Thou shalt shew me the path of life.”

Well, but how to accomplish this? how to feed that life for eternity? There are certain material meats and drinks, which God has set for the nourishment of this our bodily life. We take them: we insert them into and mingle them with our bodily frames, and by our Creator’s wonderful provision they are taken up into those frames, and become part of them, and by them we grow and our waste is renovated. Now, dear friends, not otherwise is it in the provision for life eternal. God has provided for its bread, not various material substances, but one glorious and wonderful kind of spiritual food, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, his blessed Son. And

in a spiritual manner analogous to that other physical operation, must the Lord Jesus be fed upon by the soul, apprehended by and taken into and mingled with the thoughts and the very springs of life: made to a man's deemings and daily procedure not only as real, but as much grasped, and taken in, and assimilated, as is that physical food in the other case. You will say, How is this done? and some one will answer, By faith. And the answer is a very true and good one, provided we know what it means. For it must be ever remembered, that faith is not itself a securing of the end contemplated, but only a condition of attaining the end. Appetite is a condition of nourishment: but appetite is not nourishment. Faith is the condition of feeding upon Christ, but faith is not that feeding. It has pleased him to appoint certain outward means, by which he the Bread of Life is presented to the faithful soul. Such are, in their measure, the ordinances of praise and prayer, and the hearing and reading his word: and such is, in a very solemn and especial sense, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. These, the elements, represent to us his body broken and his blood shed for us. They serve to our faith, and they serve to his life-giving power, as the five loaves and the two fishes did on that other occasion. As, acting upon them, trivial and insignificant in themselves, he created food, which was not in them,

for all that multitude: so, acting upon that bread and that wine, equally trivial and insignificant in themselves, will He offer himself to the faith and desire of his people to be their spiritual food unto life everlasting. Thus it is, that the faithful do look for and do find and feed upon Him when they partake of those symbols; and thus it is that the unfaithful and worldly, though they carnally and visibly eat and drink those same elements, do it without partaking of Him at all, not discerning the Lord's body, and thus incur God's judgment for having lightly approached so solemn a thing. But to the faithful, how full of strengthening and of refreshment is that his own ordinance. For then it is, above all other times, that they feed upon Him: then, that they take into their souls and digest and assimilate the spiritual Bread of Life, and go forth from the banquet with renewed vigour for the uncertain conflicts of their way. These occasions of meeting at the table of the Lord serve to them as stages in their journey—solemn points of halting and enquiring as to their state and prospects, and summoning fresh hope for the future. In a blessed and spiritual sense, they eat, and live. But let it not be supposed that in thus speaking of the chief occasion of feeding on the Bread of life, I am forgetting, or disparaging, those other occasions, with which God's grace so abundantly provides us. The Christian's

whole course is full of opportunities of feeding upon Christ. In this sense especially it is, that the great family is taught to pray, "Give us day by day our daily bread"—even HIM,—in his word, in his works, in all that we do and are permitted to be and suffer,—who is alone the bread of life.

And, dear friends, let us carry away from this subject, some part indeed of what has been maintained and set forth to-day, if it be according to God's will: but O beyond and above all that I have said, let us take home with us this firm conviction,—Christ is the Bread of Life, and we *must* feed upon him, if we would live here or hereafter. His person, his work, his intercession in heaven for us, his future coming in glory, must be not things to speculate upon, to dispute upon, to have this or that opinion upon, but facts to take and use and live by, just as we take and use and live by the ordinary facts of common life. We must do this, or we cannot live in the best and blessed sense of the word, in time or in eternity. And if this be true, then is it not also true that no wise man, even to put it on no higher ground, will allow himself to neglect these banquets of that heavenly food, to which we are from time to time invited by Christ himself? If all whom I address were anxious to be strengthened and refreshed by this living Bread in their souls, then would they also and in like measure be

anxious to be found there, where is the principal and most important occasion of gaining that strength and refreshment. You cannot serve Christ and despise his sacraments. You cannot afford to put by, in feeding your spiritual life on Him, this his own appointed season and way of offering himself for your participation.

O beloved, work not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life: let not your Saviour be always standing without, pleading for admission into your hearts and lives: open to Him and let him in, and live by Him and with him: that so being firmly united to Him and having your life knit up with his, and hidden in Him, you may be like Him when he appears, and live and grow by him to unknown degrees of love, and knowledge, and power, for ever and ever.

SERMON XVI.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

1857.

ROM. xiv. 7—9.

“None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.”

WE have been mainly treating during our sermons of the past ecclesiastical year—of the Person and Office of our Lord. I little thought, when I begun that course in Advent, that my ministry among you was so near its end: but had I done so, I could not have concluded it with a subject more solemn and appropriate. For where is our hope, where our joy, where our bond of union, but in Him? What thought so proper for parting friends to leave on one another’s minds, as that of him in whom they live before God, and move, and have their being

—in whom, though separated, they are one, and before whom they all hope to meet with confidence at his coming? I cannot conceive any range of spiritual subjects better or more edifying for us all to remember each other by, than this of the details of the Person and Office of Christ. But we are now arrived at the time, when we have but few words more to speak together: and I feel that it will be well to make this day's and Ascension Day's sermons, the termination of this course, and to devote our remaining opportunities to some close and homely converse on the state and prospects of religion in society among us.

Following then this plan, I have selected the words of our text, as giving us a view of one of the great closing themes of a course on the Person and Office of Christ: viz. that he is the Lord and Possessor of us all, and in an especial manner of his own believing people. "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: ^{whether} whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ ~~both~~ ^{lived again} ~~died, and rose, and revived,~~ that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." Now you may notice, that in these words, as so often in general statements of this kind in St. Paul, there seems to be an universal reference, and a particular one also. For while it is obvious

that the great assertion of ^{the} ~~our~~ text has a sense in which it is true of the whole race of man, in which every man, whatever doing or suffering, is Christ's, it is equally obvious that there is also another sense, and that the only blessed and full one, in which they and they alone are ~~his~~, who are consciously united to ~~him~~ in ~~his~~ death unto sin and ~~his~~ life unto righteousness: who shall reign and walk with ~~him~~ in light, where ~~he~~ is in the glory of the Father. Let ~~then~~ these two senses employ our time ~~this~~ ~~1. mornings, and~~ let us take first the general fact announced in the last words. ~~2.~~

“To this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.” We shall best understand this by passing through the closer and more special of these two senses, as being that which belongs to the immediate subject and context here. The Apostle is speaking of the duty of all Christians to judge one another charitably, and grounding it on this fact, that it is not to himself, but to the Lord, that every Christian man lives and dies and performs all his actions. We therefore, in judging another, are judging the servant of a far higher master, to whom, and to whom alone, he standeth or falleth. And the proof of this is, this general consideration that we are not our own: that all men are the Lord's, and that the Christian feels this and acts upon

it. In another place, the Apostle presses the same consideration: "Ye are bought with a price: be not ye the servants of men." So that we are now brought close to the general fact here enounced, viz., that Christ did, with ~~his~~ most precious blood, shed in our humanity, purchase to ~~himself~~ us—this universal race of man, to be ~~his~~ in a peculiar manner, in which it was not and could not be ~~his~~, without the shedding of that blood, and the triumph which He achieved through death. Moreover the Apostle declares to us, that thus to become possessor and Lord both of the dead and living, was the object and end which the Son of God set before ~~himself~~ in ~~this~~ sufferings and ~~this~~ triumphs. ("To *this* end," &c.

Now I want to know, my brethren, whether you and I have any definite or adequate idea of this great truth, for a great truth it assuredly is, if it be a truth at all: that our blessed Lord, as we very constantly and properly call ~~him~~, not only created us, not only redeemed us, but by ~~his~~ death and triumph has set ~~himself~~ up over us as our rightful Lord and our indefeasible King; and that to exercise this ownership of us by purchase was the object which setting before ~~him~~ ~~he~~ both died and rose and revived? I ask whether any of us has any sufficient notion of this great thing. We call him, our Lord: doubtless, but why? He created us: some modern Christians do not even

know that: and so far He rules us and has a right to rule us: but that is not the matter of which we now speak: He redeemed us—and laid down his precious life for us: and on that account we are his by a peculiar purchase: his in a new and constraining manner. To this end he died. Let us see, as we may be enabled, what these words mean. *(U)* The death of Christ is usually and rightly looked upon as the great atonement for our sin—for the sin of the world. But in so regarding it, men not only stop here when they should go very much further, but they do not apprehend even thus much aright. *they* ~~I need not go over this old and oft-trodden ground again:~~ but I will only just say that, *they* ~~as long as you have an idea of Christ the Son of God, as merely made one living man, taken and substituted for other men in God's sight as their atonement, you cannot by any possibility, I will not say reach the depths of this matter, for that perhaps none of us can be said to do, but you cannot have any connected ideas of it at all. According to your theory, for a mere theory it is, and one confined to the miserable theology of these shallow times, your theory of what I will take leave to call the mere substitution of Christ for us, you could give no account whatever of the fact, that by so doing~~ *that* ~~he intended to become *Lord of our nature.* If~~ *he* ~~A pays a penalty on behalf of B, there may exist a claim of gratitude, but there results no~~


fact of lordship or ownership whatever. And it is characteristic enough, that those persons who in our own time regard the death of our Lord as the mere substitution of one for another, do most commonly altogether forget, or even deny, the fact of his universal lordship and headship over our race, and will not allow it to be asserted or implied. If I come to a poor sinner living in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, and say to him, Thou hast a heavenly King, a glorious Head, one who died for thee and lives for thee—awake, arise, for thy light is come: if I kindle a spark in that faded eye, and bring the flush into that wan cheek, and take that prostrate form by the hand in the power of Christ, and lift him up, so that he begins to walk and leap and praise God, my friend comes to me with his withering modern theology, and commands me to let him drop again, and persuades him that this is not really so: that he has not as matter of fact this heavenly human King and glorious Head, but merely in some metaphorical and utterly barren spiritual sense, which is entirely past the comprehension of the poor sinner. And so he sinks down again into his indifference: and so, brethren, thousands have sunk down and are sinking down in this and other lands: and ~~this in fact is~~ *this* is one great reason why ~~your~~ evangelical preaching is failing, yes, every where failing to work social changes and renew men's souls; because


it does not proclaim ~~and cannot receive~~ the fundamental doctrine of the inclusive Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ: because, anxious as its promulgators ever and rightly are to proclaim the fact of the atonement, they degrade that atonement into a mere substitution, which never can bring with it any real matter of fact consequences; and they allow to pass out of sight the one truth of God, that He who was stricken thus as our substitute, was, not ^a personal man, but the personal Son of God with our whole nature upon him; bearing on his own divine Person your flesh, and mine, and the flesh of all the many thousand millions of mankind, as certainly and actually as Adam bore us all in himself when he stood alone in God's world. ~~And so they forget~~ that thus bearing our entire nature upon ~~him~~, thus carrying it down into death and out through the tomb and up into glory, ~~he~~ has become Lord both of the dead and of the living: that in order for ~~him~~ to be my Head and my King, it is not necessary that I should first believe it, and then in some unreal and unaccountable way it becomes so to me: I am not the measure of this fact: but it exists irrespective of me and my belief—it is God's eternal truth—it is God's ONE eternal truth, by which ~~he~~ will save the world: and when I apprehend this truth that Christ ~~is~~ my Head and King,—that ~~he~~ lives in me and through me,—that ~~his~~ death is my death, ~~his~~

through
such
teaching
such as

victory my victory, ~~his~~ crown my crown, ~~his~~ spirit my spirit, then, and not till then, can I lift myself up, and shake off the dust of death, and stand up in God's sight a pardoned and a justified man, with God's work before me and God's help to do it with ~~then~~, and not till then, can I look down the dim path of life, with weakness and pain and death coming over the end of it, and feel no fear and no regret: because I know that it is not I, not this poor weak detached fragment of mortality, who have to go into and be crushed by all this, but it is Christ in me; that I am part and parcel of Him and He of me: and that if with Him I am to go into agony and into death, it is as impossible that I should be holden of it, as it was that He should be: as certain that up through and out of it I shall enter into glory, as it was certain that He should enter into glory. Mind when I say these latter words, I say them in the full supposition of my holding fast by Him in the belief which I am setting forth. God's fact is one and the same for all. (Christ is our universal Head. All our nature is in ~~him~~; every man, woman and child of it in all time. (Man's belief is just the lighting up of this fact in reference to that individual man, and making it to be to him *the fact* of his own individual life. Well then, you say ~~to me~~, you are come to faith after all. Come to faith? ~~to be sure I am~~. Do you suppose this wonderful being ~~which you and I~~

Yes certainly
we are
of one

~~are~~, body animated by life and lighted by spirit, can be rescued, can be saved, can be glorified, without and in the abeyance of its higher powers? If you are to benefit the body by medicine, must not the body take it in? If you are to turn a man's course for good, must you not persuade him? And if this inclusion in Christ, this fact and potentiality of God which *He* has brought about in the mystery of redemption, is in its turn to bring about in you holiness, and joy, and fruit for God, and future glory, do you suppose it can do so without your apprehending it, without your applying it as a reality to your whole life and thoughts? 

So of course we come to faith, and always must come to faith, in every spiritual matter. ~~whatever~~: but the difference between me and my friend is this: ~~We~~ *we* give you, because  God gives you, for your faith to fix and feed upon, a present living fact: Christ is yours, and you are ~~his~~; He is your Head, and you are one of ~~his~~ members: He lives and breathes in you, and you in Him: ~~his~~ death is yours in all its consequences: ~~his~~ life is yours in all its operations: ~~his~~ glory is yours in all its hopes and anticipations: go, deem this, and act this, and tell your neighbour this: be blessed and a blessing: feed on this food and live. That is ~~my~~ *our* mission from God to you. ~~Whereas my~~ friend gives you a past and dead fact, that ~~just~~ 1823 years ago God gave his Son

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to die for your sins, and that you ought to be very thankful to Him for this, so thankful, as to give yourself up to him who has done so much for you, and serve Him with all your might. ^{mp} Now ~~mind~~, I do not say that these words are not true: but ~~I~~ do say, that they are not half the truth: ~~We~~ say that they just miss the one point whereby they might lay hold of you, and excite your attention, and win your feelings, and catch your very heart. In fact, the difference between us is in a word; that ~~my~~ ^{our} friend sets before you "Christ, the hope of glory"—and that is a good thing, but barely thus put a barren thing; and ~~We~~ set before you as St. Paul set before his Colossians, "Christ IN YOU, the hope of glory," which is not a barren thing, but a glorious and living fact upon which you and I can take hold and live. And as St. Paul in that very passage calls this fact (Col. i. 27) the riches of the glory of the mystery of God, so I say that my supposed friend, and with him a considerable portion of the so-called evangelical preachers of our day, do miss the riches of the glory of this mystery of God, and in consequence their work is not blessed and not fruitful.

Well, now I think we see some light playing over these words, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live

therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." It was Christ's great purpose, to clothe himself with, to include in himself, to bring down into death and up into glory, this race of ours. On our side, whether this shall be so or not, depends on the fixed laws of our individual and responsible being, which he did not come to break in Redemption, but to uplift and strengthen: depends on the allowed and appointed free will of us his creatures, which He has not abolished but sanctified: but on his side the work was complete: the whole race was put on by Him: he became its Head, and carried out his great purpose in his death, in his rising, in his reviving, of becoming Lord of it all,—of the dead, and of the living; of those that had past away when he died, of those who were on earth when he rose, of those who were yet to be born when he revived: by virtue of this his inclusive Headship he is King and Lord and Head of us all.

And now comes the application—that which depends on the other as its effective cause. "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might

be Lord both of the dead and the living." You will see, after what has been said, that these words follow as a clear and unquestionable consequence. First, it is true of all mankind. Christ's actual Headship and Lordship does not depend upon man's knowledge and recognition of it. He is Lord of all. The savage who never heard of him, in some way, which we cannot at present see, serves his purposes and ministers to his behests. The heathen in Christian lands, who live to self and the world and follow lust or fashion, as they think, and not Him, are in fact his slaves, working at a machine of which they cannot comprehend the meaning—not knowing what their Lord doeth. The sovereigns and councillors and diplomatists of this earth, while they labour for their own aggrandizement and the advancement of this or that favourite maxim of policy, are all in fact instruments in his hand, and simply doing that which He will have done: evolving unconsciously the great purposes of which the world's life is but the theatre. All humanity is his: not its greater progresses and phenomena only, but its least also. "None of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself: whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." This has its universal as well as its particular application. Every man's life, every man's death, is not his own, is not lived and died for himself and to his own purpose: but it is Christ's: Christ's

property, and subserving Christ's will, and Christ's end, and Christ's glory. The foulest life and the darkest death, whatever they may seem to us, have a meaning and a purpose, as interwoven into his almighty disposal of all things. Woe indeed unto him who thus lives and thus dies; not because he is separated from Christ—for that no creature of his can ever be, at least *here*, while grace is offered: but because he has never apprehended, never felt, never lived up into and made his own, this blessed thing, the Lordship and Headship of Christ, which might have been to him life eternal.

And now we come to ~~And this brings us~~ to the more proper and more close application of the words—that in which the terms “we” and “us” are referred to those who have apprehended, who do feel, who are living up into and making their own, this glorious truth. And here is the enormous difference between these and those others: that these persons are consciously realizing to its fullest extent the fact on which we have been insisting. They are one with Christ: He is their King, as He is King of all, but they are His willing and His devoted subjects; friends, not servants, nor bondmen. *And it does follow* with every man who thus apprehends the Gospel of Christ and Christ himself, that his life and thoughts must be changed and purified and sanctified by Christ's spirit. For if I, with mine inner man, have laid hold on this truth as my truth of life,

that Christ is my Lord and Head, that it is Christ who lives in me, not I myself merely, and that I am a partaker of Christ's victory and Christ's glory, just so far as ~~his~~ his holy and sin-hating and godly life is carried on and carried out in me, ~~why~~, is it not totally impossible that I should live in sin or *to* sin? Is not this the very opposite of my whole intent and aim and struggle in life? And thus it is, ~~beloved~~, that faith is said to purify the heart: he that is joined to the Lord by faith being one spirit with Him, and so becoming ever more and more like Him in this life until finally he becomes entirely like Him at ~~his~~ his appearing.

Let us then spend our remaining time in closely applying to ourselves as Christians these remarkable words of our text, "None of us liveth to himself." No, dear friends, our lives are not our own, and do not let us for a moment regard them as such. They are *His*. All their events, all their interests, all their energies, belong to him who died and rose and revived that he might purchase them to himself. *His* they are by right: let them be his by our free and joyful acceptance of him as their rightful possessor. "None of us liveth to himself." O would that these words were as literally true in fact on our side as they are on his side—that we as entirely obeyed, as he entirely rules! Would that I were speaking to no selfish, no vain, no ambitious Christians, but to Christians

who were giving themselves up to Him, and simply glorifying him in their places and duties of life! Whatever is not of faith is sin; and just for this reason; that every act and thought of our lives is sin, which is not done and conceived in subordination to him who is Lord of our being; and faith is just the apprehension and realization of this his lordship over us. O think on these things. Are you living to yourself? pleasing yourself, indulging yourself, flattering yourself—putting up with some empty theological dogma in the place of a living present Master and Saviour, and persuading yourselves that you are his? You are his in the one sense, whoever you are: but you are not his in the other, think and profess what you will, unless you are serving him and not yourselves. It is one thing to be crushed under his chariot wheels, and so subjected to him: and it is another thing to be his willing and loving servants, and so share his triumph.

But again—"None of us dieth to himself." No, brethren; and here is a more solemn thing still. I believe none will doubt this. Selfishness in death? Yes, it doubtless may be. Our great English satirist has painted, in several well-known and vivid sketches, the ruling passion strong even at that awful moment: but it is the very incongruity which gives life to his descriptions. "No man dieth to himself." For then that which the world calls self has become

a loathsome thing: the self of past life stands detected and arraigned and convicted: if a man's life have not been humble, his death at least aims to be: most men are saints on their death-beds. But saints or not, this position is just as true: "None dieth to himself." Death, as well as life, is in Christ's hand: and when He will, and as He will, and for what end He will, he orders it, and brings it about. Still, here again, there is a blessed and glorious meaning of the words, exemplified only in the faithful. They die like other men: but O most unlike other men also. In Christ they have lived: Christ, the air they have breathed, the bread they have fed on, the sun they have worked by; and in Christ they die: fall asleep in Jesus, as the faithful saying is: die unto Him: and are taken up into Him: not absorbed in Him,—O no: Christianity absorbs not, but sanctifies and glorifies, our personal being: but taken up into Him, in becoming actual spiritual partakers of his celestial and glorified state, and in that participation waiting in the paradise of God for that full revelation of Him in his people, which shall be made at his appearing, when they shall be, body, soul and spirit, knit up with his glorious manhood, and serve him with their renewed and perfected powers for ever and for ever and for ever.

Well then, brethren, let our conclusion be in the remaining words of our text—and let us

adopt it not as a world-fact merely, but as a living and personal truth of each man's own being;—

“Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's.”

SERMON XVII.

ASCENSION DAY.

1857.

1 PET. iii. 22.

“Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God ; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”

DURING this our course of sermons on the Person and Office of Christ, we have traced Him, from his pre-existent state in glory, through the chief of those acts which it pleased him to accomplish for our Redemption, and of those various characters in which He has become to us the source and supply of grace for all our spiritual wants. To-day, we are summoned from our homes to celebrate his last act done on our earth,—his removal from us into that glory which He had with the Father before the world begun. The Ascension of our Lord was, in one point of view, only a result of his resurrection, and the proper completion of his triumph then achieved. That is, no new work

was done by him after his resurrection which brought about his ascension. It was his pleasure to remain on earth during those forty days, in order to shew himself alone to his disciples, and to establish beyond doubt the fact, that he was risen from the dead: but they were only a delay interposed before that solemn and triumphant departure whose way was already prepared. Yet for this very reason, because it was the accomplishment of his triumph over sin and death, is our Lord's Ascension the most important event which could possibly engage the attention of Christians: and the day of its celebration ought to rank certainly with the very highest and most solemn of Christian festivals. In proportion as a just appreciation of the great truths of our religion prevails over the miserable party wranglings which now so much usurp its place, will the estimation of this day rise in the minds of all Christians among us: till it occupies to the full the respect so generally and properly paid to the celebrations of Christ's birth and his passion. Let us to-day view the great event in its meaning and its consequences, and thus bring in the conclusion of our course this year on the person and office of our Lord.

First of all then, the Ascension of Jesus was the seal of the accomplishment of Redemption. His work which he wrought in our nature was, the rescuing it from the dominion of sin, and bringing it into union with God. And his own

humanity, having upon it not sin in its taint and practice, but sin in its imputed guilt and its consequences, had been, through a course of perfect unsinning obedience, brought up from infirmity and suffering and death, into the glorious state of the resurrection body. "The death which he died, he died unto sin once for all: but the life which he liveth, he liveth unto God." From the time of his resurrection, not only was he as before, in spirit and in essence one with the Father, but his very humanity, his flesh and bones and bodily frame, these were all manifested to be taken out and united with the Godhead in perfect harmony and everlasting bliss. Those words could now no longer be used, which in the hour of his agony, he applied as much to himself as to his disciples—"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak:" for there was no more weakness in the body of his glory; no more sense of offence or pain. Now you will be prepared to hear the next step of our present description. This his glorious state of final perfection of humanity is not his alone. It belongs not to him, any more than his Death and Resurrection belonged to him, as man individual. It belongs, in its actuality and in its effects, to our whole nature, which he bore on him and bears on him at this moment. That body of his is received up into glory. But what is that body? Enoch was not: for God took him. Elijah went bodily up

into heaven. Moses has been seen appearing in glory with that body over which the evil one had no power. But what are these? We think of them, and we thank God for them: but we have no part or lot in them: for themselves, and by themselves, they ran their godly course, and in his power whom they served, wrought righteousness, and entered on their reward: they are walking in light, but their light shines not on us: they are objects of our wonder, of our thankfulness, of our hopeful regard: but no more. But HE has entered into the heavenly places not for himself, nor by himself: He is the Head of the body the Church: the vine of which all his people are branches: his exaltation is their exaltation: his union, in his humanity, to the Father, is their union, to Him in their weak and struggling state here below. They are dead, and their life is hid with Christ in God. And now that humanity of his has become to all mankind potentially, and to all who believe on him actually, the link of union to the divine nature, the channel of grace from God to man, the door of access from man to God. In, and as accomplished in, that humanity thus glorified, does the Father behold all his creatures, and all his purposes: in him it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and that all things in heaven and in earth should be summed up. And by that glorified humanity is all approach to the Father

made : no man cometh to the Father but by Him : and his flesh, now for ever consecrated as a new and living way to God, is the temple of the Godhead, through which we may, and through which only we can, have boldness to enter into the holiest place, by virtue of the sacrifice of his blood once shed in the offering of that body once for all. Here then, dear friends, we have our Redemption for ever accomplished, and sealed to us beyond the possibility of change. We may be struggling in conflict, but that triumph of our Head is an assured fact which nothing can shake : and of that triumph every one, even the lowliest of its members, shall be partaker. We may waver, and be troubled with doubts, and despair of our salvation, and faint under the attacks of our enemy : but he, the pledge and forerunner of our acceptance, is there at the right hand of God, his conflict over, his victory won, all power given unto him in heaven and earth.

O how blessed an encouragement is this, in all our difficulties and under all our troubles. Thou feeble Christian, who believest, and prayest, and strivest, but hast never laid firm hold on the hope set before thee, who day by day art conning over thine own imperfections, and shrinking from the presence of thine own shortcomings, turn thine eyes from looking inward, and look upward on Him where he is. That human Body, pierced but glorified, marred above mea-

sure, but also exalted above measure, let that be thy one object of contemplation. There is thy safety: there thy guarantee of God's favour: on that blessed form falls no frown of the Father's countenance, but an everlasting smile of approval, and under that smile thou, his lowly and fainting member, art included. Fix thine eyes on Him, and fear not: in Him thou hast all: in Him all God's promises are yea and amen: through Him thou shalt rise after all thy falls: shalt win after all thy defeats: shalt enter into the kingdom after all thy doubts: for he that hath the Son, hath life. And I know of no one thing in all our holy belief so full of consolation, so full of joy, so full of hope, as the contemplation of that exalted humanity of our blessed Lord. It seems the only sure, the only present thing for me to look on; the one outward fact, of which neither my own doubts, nor Satan's malice, nor the world's cavils, can ever rob me. Christ's *birth* is full of joy to me, but it comes to my mind wrapped in mystery, and prompting high thoughts, and setting me afloat on many speculations: besides, it is past, and has now run up into results greater than itself; and when I think on it, I am obliged to abstract my thoughts from my own state, and the state of all around me, and to look on it as a set subject, and strain after its glories till I fall down wearied, and spring back to the present with its wants and its con-

flicts. Christ's *death* is, it is true, far more direct in its operation and more powerful to rule and engage my thought: in its power I stand: in its cleansing might I dwell in faith before my God, that blood sprinkled on my lintel and sideposts, the destroying angel every day and night rushing by on his dark wings, and every day sparing to smite, because that blood is there: it is good for me to think on the death of my God for me; it is the life of my faith and the nourishment of my sense of pardon: but O my friends, it is not a very easy thing; it is not a thing altogether unaccompanied with deep thoughts of sadness;—not a thing to which my mind reverts as its favourite, or, even in its new nature, its natural employ: I want special seasons, I want reserved times of self-searching, to send me to the cross to sit and gaze there. And even the *resurrection*, with all its glories and all its joys—O let us not for one moment question its brightness, nor mar the beauty of its recollection—but even in that, from its very nature, I see a past fact, the sunrise from out of the tomb of him in whom I live. Glorious and unclouded was that sunrise: but it too *was*: and though I love to dwell on it when Easter comes, and when its weekly festival shines out upon God's church and summons his people together,—yet even that Resurrection is a subject on which I must fix my thoughts; a deed to which I must look back

with an effort: which does not do more than suggest a greater and higher subject, which follows on it as its fruit and result. O my friends, I want in my belief which is to sustain me, which is to invigorate me, which is to renew me in holiness, something as present to me as the world and the flesh and the devil are present with me: not only a past fact, however gracious and glorious: not only a series, however wonderful, of such past facts: but a present fact, which I may look upon as part of this moment in which I live and struggle onward. And I can find this only in the glorified form of my Lord, now in heaven at God's right hand, holding together this world, creating, blessing, vivifying, governing, all things. This is no past matter: no subject to reach which my thoughts must be summoned to put forth unwonted strength, and soar with weary wing: but it is a present and abiding fact: one bound up with that which I see and hear and feel around me: a fact apprehended indeed by faith and not by sight, but none the less a present fact. Far above this earth with her living tribes and her waving blossoms, far above these bright stars which bound the vision of the outward eye, I see that form of him in whom I live: there is he, who is made to me wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption: his life is my obedience: his blood is my ransom: his resurrection is my justification:

his glory is my triumph. "If when I was an enemy, I was reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall I be saved by his LIFE." Earth and hell may combine against my weak nature: but there I see that nature standing in the God-head glorified, and I know that I am safe. Outward appearances may discourage me to the utmost: confusion may seem to have come upon the ways of God: the church may appear to be broken up into spiritual anarchy, and the world to be drifting away to everlasting ruin: but to me neither the church, nor the world, is a mass of insulated facts and beings each contradicting the other: both the church and the world are summed up in and ruled by that glorified One, who reigns above them both; who carries in his hand the key which shall unlock every mystery, and throw open the secret chambers of God's counsels, when his time cometh. No fact like that of this day sets him before me as a present and abiding Saviour, ever ready to do all that I can need; none like this shews him to me standing in the power of his birth, in the power of his obedience, in the power of his death, in the power of his resurrection, and in the power of his glorification, to succour and to save me. And I also know no one fact in the whole of that which we believe, which furnishes so decisive and so ready an answer for us to make to the cavils of

the unbeliever and of our own hearts : an answer, I mean, ready and decisive as *our* stronghold against their effect on ourselves. I believe that Jesus died and rose again : firmly and I hope unalterably. I have those facts assured to me by historical evidence of the most irrefragable kind. Still my faith, receiving those facts, as it does, for its foundation, does not feed upon, live upon, them, but on Him whom they place before it as a present and living Saviour. It is of the *result* of Christ's death and resurrection that I must be assured, if I would stand firm against the assaults made on my faith from without and from within. And the result of that death of God in my nature, the result of that his resurrection in my nature, is, that glorified state in which I now see Him at God's right hand. If I am to be firmly established in my faith, here it must rest and be rooted : entering into that which is within the veil, and, like my life itself, being hidden with Christ in God.

But let us further carry out these thoughts before we conclude, by saying something more of his office and employ, now that he is thus exalted to be the glorified head of his people and the fountain of all grace and power. Besides being the seal and pledge of our accomplished Redemption, He is, in this his glorified state, our continuing High Priest and Intercessor. It is true that He offers no more sacrifice for sin : that

was done once for all when he sacrificed himself. But He ever stands before God for us in the strength of that one sacrifice, and pleads its abiding efficacy. You must not think of Christ's removal of sin as an act absolutely and for ever past in its completeness, so that he should have ceased to have any present part in it. The *atoning sacrifice* on the Cross is, indeed, thus past; and never needs, nor can ever admit, a renewal: but the Saviour who was there offered, ever liveth to make intercession for us: and that his intercession forms an abiding and continuing part of his removing and putting away of sin. There, in the centre of the Father's glory, he rests not idle, nor is he unmindful of those whom he came to save. They are ever borne on his thoughts, and not the least of their cares or wants is forgotten by him. Through Him, not as an unconscious medium, but as the living and conscious offerer, all prayer is made. Surely we do not realize this in our minds,—that whenever the genuine desire of the heart (for that alone is prayer) approaches the Father through the Son, that glorified Saviour himself receives that desire, and presents it, and watches for the answer to its prayer, himself a suppliant on behalf of his people. Surely we forget this, when we thoughtlessly conclude our prayers with those solemn words which have passed almost into a mere formula with so many of us —“through Jesus Christ our Lord.” We little

think what power we are throwing away, we little imagine whom we are mocking.

Again, our glorified Saviour is the giver of the Holy Spirit. We sometimes perhaps make the mistake of thinking that the Spirit was sent down on the day of Pentecost once for all, and that his abiding with the Church of Christ is a sojourning which dates and derives its continuance from the great event of that day. But this is far from being so. That descent of the Spirit was indeed the first beginning of his full and promised indwelling in the faithful: but he is no less the immediate bestowal of Christ from the Father in every believer now, than he was then when he first came upon the Church. Our exalted Head and Lord is in each individual case the bestower of the Spirit on his people. From Him all spiritual influence comes direct: and without union with Him, no man has the Spirit of the Lord. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, is a proposition which will bear converting simply thus, If any man be not Christ's he cannot have the Holy Spirit. And this is a most important consideration. For men are apt to imagine of our blessed Lord as withdrawn from his church; and the participation of spiritual gifts and spiritual life to be derived from a long succession of secondary instruments, who have since Him conveyed down to us the ordinances of grace: whereas it is by direct contact of

every believing soul with himself in glory, that all spiritual grace and gifts are derived, and means and ordinances are but helps to lifting the soul by faith into realization of his Person and Office, and into communion with him. We do not partake of Him through them, but we are raised up to the spiritual participation of Him by the right use of them as helps to our weak faculties.

And as this is true of every other means of grace, so is it eminently true of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. I have more than once before now spoken of the great fact of this day, as the one decisive testimony against error in our view of that ordinance. Had the Church been mindful of the truth of Christ's bodily ascension into glory, she never could have invented, and never could have given heed to when invented, the ridiculous fable of transubstantiation, or the notion of any kind of presence of the Lord's Body in the elements of bread and wine which we there use by his command, as representing to us that Body of his. And the tendency in our own Church, of late days so unhappily revived, to talk of and to uphold some sort of real Presence of that kind, is a standing testimony among us, how little the doctrine of Christ's ascension is understood, how little the fact of his human reigning in glory is borne in mind. All such theories, let their supporters take what ground they will,

are entirely against the truth of Christ's natural body, which is in heaven, not here: and tend, in denying that truth, to overthrow the very first foundations of our faith. The only presence of Christ in that Sacrament is in the hearts of his faithful people, where he is verily and indeed present really and actually by their faith, and is partaken of by them: and of this vital distinction, the event of this day is the great token and proof. The ascension of the Lord, as it is the most glorious and assuring present fact for the Christian to contemplate, so it is the key-stone of spiritual Christianity, as distinguished from all theories of priestly succession and dispensing of grace on earth, and from all errors of that system, whether Romish or Anglican, which makes the Sacraments, as administered by such supposed priesthood, the life of the Church. We, my brethren, have not so learned Christ. We know that our glorified Lord is ever with us. His bodily form retaining those properties which He himself manifested in it after his resurrection—his divine spiritual power extending through his whole body the Church—i. e. through every soul which receives him and believes on him. We want no conditions of approach to Him; no mediator between ourselves and him: all appointed means of grace, all duly constituted ministers of those means, we thankfully accept and earnestly desire to cultivate and to con-

tinue: but only for this, that they help us to lay hold of him. He, present, living, glorified, working, reigning over us, and around us, and in us, is all, and above all, to us: and all books, all days, all prayers, all praises, all ministers, all sacraments, all ordinances, are only valuable as they testify of Him, point to Him, help us to see Him and to realize Him, and to commune with Him, and to love Him, and to be united to Him, and to glorify Him.

And what end could be more fitting to our course on his Person and Office, than to have brought all to this,—that HE, He himself, is our Deliverer, our Advocate, our atoning High Priest or Prophet, and thus our hope and strength, and none else? Here, beloved, let us rest: if we have found him, we have found life: if each one of us be renewed in him, not having our own righteousness but his, we are on the way to glory. Let us in heart and mind thither ascend where he is gone before, and ever live this life, which we live in the flesh, by faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us.

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